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My way of teaching piano or organ is *entirely different* from all others. Out of every four hours of study, one hour is spent *entirely away from the keyboard*—learning something about Harmony and The Laws of Music. This is an awful shock to most teachers of the "old school," who still think that learning piano is solely a problem of "finger gymnastics." When you do go to the keyboard, you accomplish *twice as much*, because you *understand what you are doing*. Within four lessons I enable you to play an interesting piece not only in the original key, but in all other keys as well.

I make use of every possible scientific help—many of which are *entirely unknown* to the average teacher. My patented invention, the COLOROTONE, sweeps away playing difficulties that have troubled students for generations. By its use, Transposition—usually a "night-mare" to students—becomes easy and fascinating. With my fifth lesson I introduce another important and exclusive invention, QUINN-DEX. Quinn-Dex is a simple, hand-operated moving picture device, which enables you to see, right before your eyes, every movement of my hands at the keyboard. You *actually see the fingers move*. Instead of having to reproduce your teacher's finger movements from MEMORY—which cannot be always accurate—you have the correct models before you during every minute of practice. The COLOROTONE and QUINN-DEX save you months and



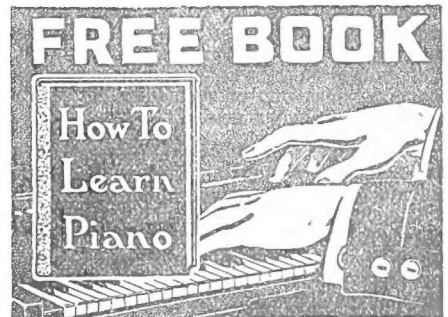
DR. QUINN AT HIS PIANO—From the famous sketch by Schneider, exhibited at the St. Louis Exposition

years of wasted effort. They can be obtained *only from me* and there is nothing else anywhere even remotely like them.

Men and women who have failed by all other methods have quickly and easily attained success when studying with me. In all *essential* ways you are in closer touch with me than if you were studying by the oral method—yet my lessons cost you only 43 cents each—and they include all the many recent developments in scientific teaching. For the student of moderate means, this method of studying is *far superior* to all others, and even for the wealthiest student, there is nothing *better at any price*.

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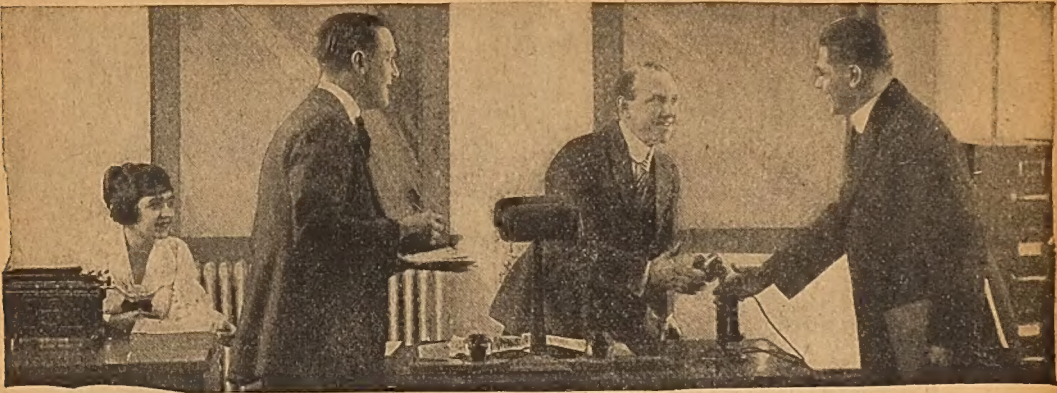
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Jan. 3rd, 1920

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Serial No. 145

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"I was astounded at my new power over men and women. People actually went out of their way to do things for me . . . they seemed **EAGER TO PLEASE ME**"

The Secret of Making People Like You

"Getting people to like you is the quick road to success, it's more important than ability," says this man. It surely did wonders for him. How he does it—a simple method which anyone can use instantly.

ALL the office was talking about it, and we were wondering which one of us would be the lucky man.

There was an important job to be filled—as Assistant-to-the-President. According to the general run of salaries in the office, this one would easily pay from \$7,000 to \$10,000 a year.

The main requisite, as we understood it, was striking personality and the ability to meet even the biggest men in their offices, their clubs and their homes on a basis of absolute equality. This the firm considered of even more importance than knowledge of the business.

You know just what happens when news of this sort gets around an office. The boys got to picking the man among themselves. They had the choice all narrowed down to two men—Harrison and myself. That was the way I felt about it, too. Harrison was big enough for the job, and could undoubtedly make a success of it. But, personally, I felt that I had the edge on him in lots of ways. And I was sure that the firm knew it, too.

Never shall I forget my thrill of pleasure when the president's secretary came into my office with a cheery smile, looked at me meaningly, handed me a bulletin and said, "Mr. Frazer, here is the news about the new Assistant-to-the-President." There seemed to be a new note of added respect in her attitude toward me. I smiled my appreciation as she left my desk.

At last I had come into my own! Never did

the sun shine so brightly as on that morning, and never did it seem so good to be alive! These were my thoughts as I gazed out of the window, seeing not the hurrying throngs, but vivid pictures of my new position flashing before me. And then for a further joyous thrill I read the bulletin. It said, "Effective January 1, Mr. Henry J. Peters, of our Cleveland office, will assume the duties of Assistant-to-the-President at the home office."

PETERS! Peters!—surely it *couldn't* be Peters! why, this fellow Peters was only a branch-office salesman . . . *Personality!* Why, he was only five feet four inches high, and had no more personality than a mouse. Stack him up against a big man and he'd look and act like an office boy. I knew Peters well and there was nothing in him, nothing at all.

January the first came and Peters assumed his new duties. All the boys were openly hostile to him. Naturally, I felt very keenly about it, and didn't exactly go out of my way to make things pleasant for him—not exactly!

But our opposition didn't seem to bother Peters. He went right on with his work and began to make good. Soon I noticed that, despite my feeling against him, I was secretly beginning to admire him. He was winning over the other boys, too. It wasn't long before we all buried our little hatchets and palled up with Peters.

The funny thing about it was the big hit he made with the people we did business with. I never saw anything like it. They would come

in and write in and telephone in to the firm and praise Peters to the skies. They insisted on doing business with him, and gave him orders of a size that made us dizzy to look at. And offers of positions!—why, Peters had almost as many fancy-figure positions offered to him as a dictionary has words.

WHAT I could not get into my mind was how a little, unassuming ordinary-to-look-at chap like Peters could make such an impression with everyone—especially with influential men. He seemed to have an uncanny influence over people. The masterly Peters of to-day was an altogether different man from the commonplace Peters I had first met years ago. I could not figure it out, nor could the other boys.

One day at luncheon I came right out and asked Peters how he did it. I half expected him to evade. But he didn't. He let me in on the secret. He said he was not afraid to do it because there was always plenty of room at the top.

What Peters told me acted on my mind in exactly the same way as when you stand on a hill and look through binocular glasses at objects in the far distance. Many things I could not see before suddenly leaped into my mind with startling clearness. A new sense of power surged through me. And I felt the urge to put it into action.

Within a month I was getting remarkable results. I had suddenly become popular. Business men of importance who had formerly given me only a passing nod of acquaintance, suddenly showed a desire for my friendship. I was invited into the most select social circles. People—even strangers—actually went out of their way to do things for me. At first I was astounded at my new power over men and women. Not only could I get them to do what I wanted them to do, but they actually anticipated my wishes and seemed eager to please me.

I COULD tell you dozens of similar instances, but they all tell the same story—the ability to make people like you, believe what you want them to believe, and to do what you want them to do. I take no personal credit for what I have done. All the credit I give to the method Peters told me about. We have told it to lots of our friends, and it has enabled them to do just as remarkable things as Peters and I have done.

Which reminds me: One of my wife's close friends moved to another town where she was a stranger. My wife of

course knew of my method. She told it to her friend with the idea that it might be of assistance to her in meeting new people. It helped her so wonderfully that in a very short time she won the close friendship of many of the "best families" in the town. Everyone wonders how she did it. But WE know.

WHAT Peters told me at luncheon that day was this: "Get Dr. Blackford's 'Reading Character at Sight.'" I did so. This is how I learned to do all the remarkable things I have told you about.

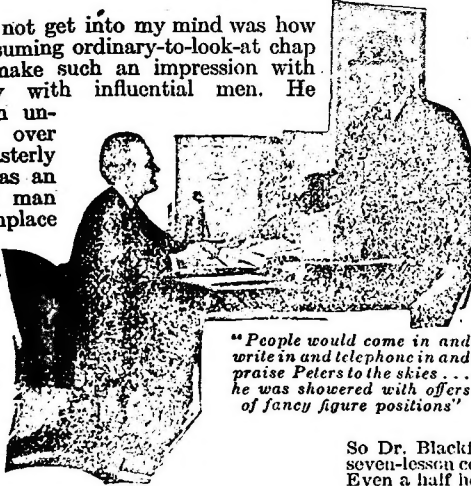
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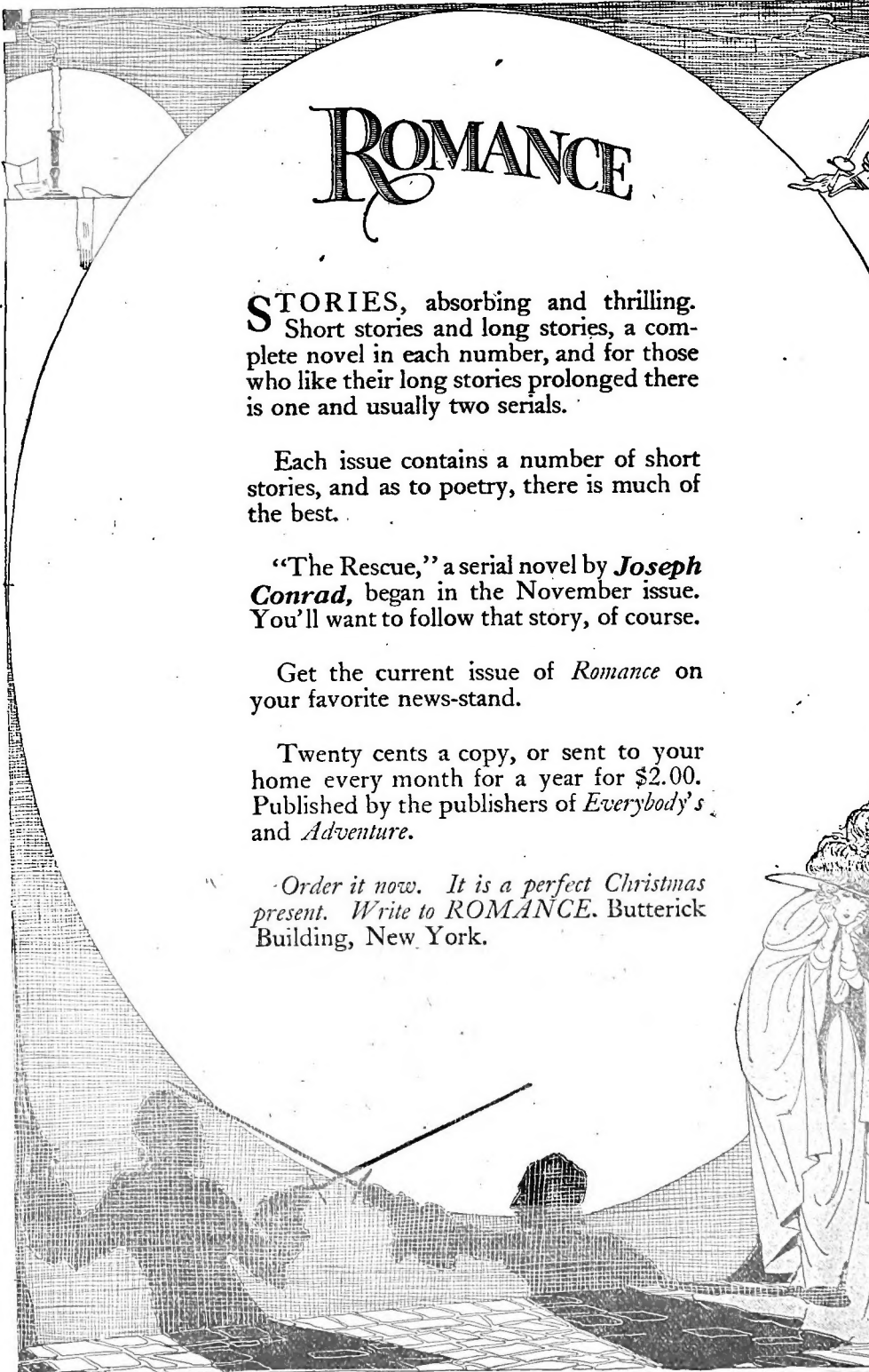
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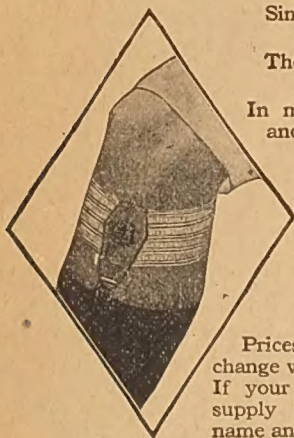
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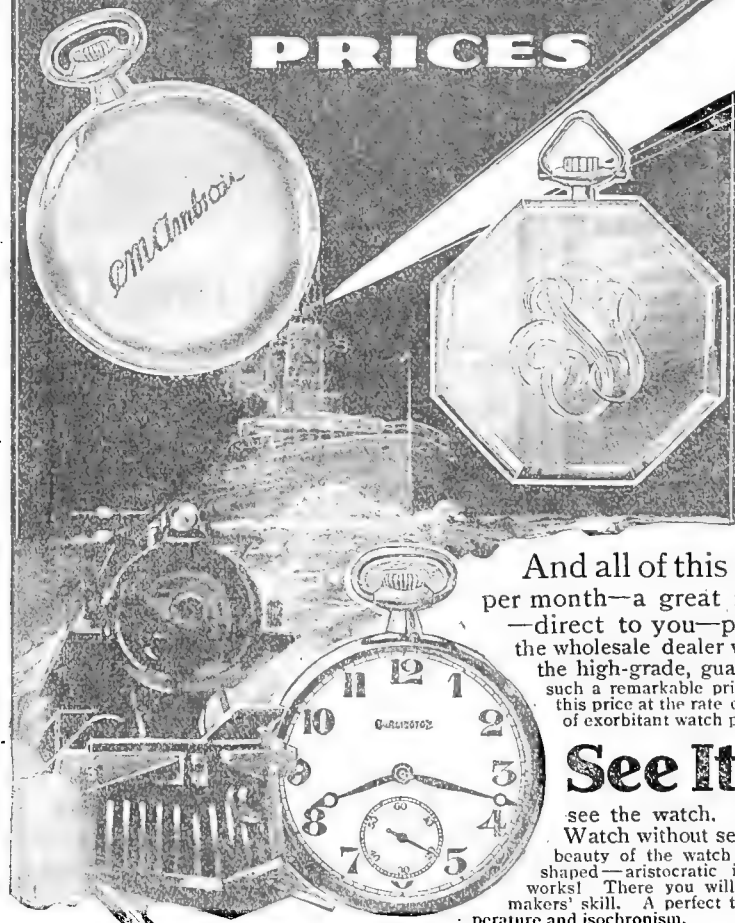
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** Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off the Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of *Adventure*, published semi-monthly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1919. State of New York. County of New York. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the *Adventure*, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher: THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City. Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York City. Managing Editor, ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, 223 Spring Street, New York City. Business Manager, JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, 223 Spring Street, New York City. 2. That the owners are: (Give names and addresses of individual owners, or, if a corporation, give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of the total amount of stock.) Owner: THE RIDGWAY COMPANY, a corporation, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City. Stockholders: THE FEDERAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, a corporation, 15 Exchange Place, Jersey City, N. J. THE BUTTERICK COMPANY, a corporation, 223 Spring Street, New York City. GEORGE B. BLACK, 812 Lincoln Avenue, Mendota, Illinois. W. H. GELSHENEN, 100 William Street, New York City, N. Y. H. F. MORSE, 3 West 46th Street, New York City, N. Y. LAURA J. O'LOUGHLIN, 156 Ridge Street, Glens Falls, N. Y. MRS. ARETHUSA POND, San Remo Hotel, New York City, N. Y. ERMAN J. RIDGWAY, 230 Broadway, New York City. AUGUSTUS VAN WYCK, 140 Broadway, New York City. R. A. VAN WYCK, 140 Broadway, New York City. G. W. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. BEN F. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. MARIE A. WILDER, Butterick Building, New York City, N. Y. JAMES F. BIRMINGHAM, 223 Spring Street, New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent. or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. 5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the six months preceding the date shown above is. (This information is required from daily publications only.) J. F. BIRMINGHAM, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 30th day of September, 1919. CECIL L. WAHL, Notary Public, Kings County. Certificate filed New York County. (My commission expires March 30, 1920.) [Seal.] Form 3526.—Ed. 1916.

Adventure

Jan 3 1920
Vol 24 No 1



The GREEN SPLOTCHES

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE★

By T. S. Stribling

Transcribed from the field notes of James B. Standifer, Secretary DeLong Geographical Expedition to the Rio Infernillo, Peru, with introductory note by J. B. S.

SECRETARY'S NOTE

THE strange not to say sinister record of the DeLong Geographical Expedition to the department of Ayacucho, Peru, is here given to the public in order that a wider discussion of the facts herein set forth may lead to some solution of the enigmas with which this narrative is laden.

These field notes have been privately circulated among the members of the DeLong Geographical Society, and the addenda to this account written by our president, Gilbert H. DeLong, have proved highly gratifying to the writer. No doubt this effort at publicity will bring forward other and equally interesting hypotheses.

It is hardly necessary to warn readers who devote themselves exclusively to fiction that this record is not for them.

Fiction deals in probabilities; geographical societies, unfortunately, are confined to facts. Fiction is a record of imaginary events, which, nevertheless, adheres to and explains human experience. Facts continually step outside of experience and offer riddles and monstrosities.

Thus, in a way, fiction is much truer than fact. Fiction is generalized truth; it is an international legal tender accredited everywhere; fact is a very special truth, which passes current only with the most discerning—or with none.

Therefore the writer wishes heartily to commend the great American scramble after fiction. It shows our enlightened public wishes to get at the real universal truths of Life, without wasting precious moments on all such improbabilities as science, history, archeology, biography, invention and exploration.

To the last of this censored list these field notes unfortunately belong.

In conclusion the writer wishes to admit that he favors the Incan theory in explaining

this narrative, and the reader is warned that this prejudice may color these notes. However, it has not been the writer's intention to do violence, through any twisting of fact, to the Bolshevik theory of Prof. Demetrios Z. Demetrioovich, the Rumanian *attaché* to the expedition, or to the Jovian hypothesis of our esteemed president, the Hon. Gilbert H. DeLong, than whom, be it said, no man is more tolerant of the views of others.—JAMES B. STANDIFER, Sec. DeL. Geo. Exp., Sept. 17, 1919.

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

THE writer met the DeLong Geographical Expedition at Colon in June, 1919, on their way to New York. His curiosity was strongly aroused by the fact that every member of the party, even to the twenty-four-year-old secretary of the expedition, Mr. James B. Standifer, was completely white-headed and seemed to be suffering from some nervous complaint in the nature of shell shock.

At that time the writer was correspondent for the Associated Press and he naturally saw a "story" in the returning scientists. After some effort and persuasion, he obtained Mr. Standifer's field notes and photographs. The photographs were practically worthless on account of the deterioration of the films. And a single glance through the notes showed him that they were not practicable "A. P." material. After much consideration and many discussions with Mr. Standifer, the writer decided that the only possible form in which this strange memoranda could be placed before the public was in the guise of fiction.

Unfortunately this disguise is neither deep nor cleverly done. The crude outline of the actual occurrences destroys all approach to plot. Many of the incidents are irrelevant, but the only condition upon which Mr. Standifer would agree to this publication at all was

* This is an "Off the Trail" Story. See second contents page.

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that his record be given *in extenso*, "for the benefit," he stated, "of future and more studious generations."

In fact, throughout the writer's association with him, Mr. Standifer seemed of a sour, not to say misanthropic, disposition. His sarcasm, which he hurls at the American fiction-reading public in his prefatory note, is based entirely, the writer believes, on the fact that Standifer wrote a book of travel called "Reindeer in Iceland," which he published at his own expense and which entirely failed to sell. That, no doubt, is enough to acidulate the sweetest disposition, but in a way it goes to prove that Mr. Standifer's notes on the Peruvian expedition are a painstaking and literal setting forth of genuine experiences, for a perusal of "Reindeer in Iceland," which the writer purchased from Mr. Standifer for fifty-three cents, shows its author has absolutely no imagination whatever.

It is hardly worth while to add that the explanatory note appended to this narrative by that distinguished scholar and author, the Right Honorable Gilbert H. DeLong, has not been touched by this pen.—T. S., Sept. 27, 1919.

I

SEÑOR IGNACIO RAMADA, prefect of the department of Ayacucho, tapped his red lips under his mustache to discourage an overpowering yawn. It was mid *siesta*, high noon. He had been routed out of profound slumber by his *cholo*—boy—and presented with a long, impressive document with a red seal. Now he stood in the Salle des Armes of the governor's mansion, holding in his hand the letter of introduction from the *presidente* of the Lima Sociedad de Geografico, very much impressed even amid his sleepiness by the red seal of the *sociedad* and by the creaking new equipment of his callers.

"How, *señores*, can I assist in such a glorious undertaking?" he inquired in Spanish.

"We need guides," explained Prof. Demetrioovich, who was the linguist of the party.

"Where does your journey carry you, *caballeros*?" inquired the official, crackling the parchment in his hand.

"To the region beyond the Mantaro, called the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo."

Señor Ramada came out of his sleepiness with a sort of start.

"No!"

"Yes."

The prefect looked at his guests.

"*Señores*, no one goes there."

Pethwick, the engineer, smiled.

"If the region were quite well known, Señor Ramada, it would hold little attraction for a geographical exploration party."

"Well—that's true," agreed the prefect after a moment's thought, "but it will be quite difficult to get a guide for that place; in fact—" here he swept his visitors with a charming smile—"the better a man knows that region, the farther he keeps away from it. Seriously, gentlemen, why not explore some more hospitable locality, where one can find a comfortable inn at night and procure relays of llamas when necessary for your baggage?"

Pethwick smiled friendlily.

"We did think of exploring the suburbs of Lima, but the street service was so bad——"

"Do you read novels?" inquired Standifer, the young secretary of the expedition.

"Why—yes," admitted the prefect, taken aback; "I am fond of Cisneros, Lavalle, Arestegui——"

The secretary pressed his lips together, nodded disdainfully and without further remark looked away through the entrance into the diamond-like brilliance of tropical sunshine in mountainous regions.

The prefect stared. "*Señor*," he said rather sharply, "if you do not approve my literary taste——"

Pethwick stepped to the little Spaniard's side and whispered quickly:

"Overlook it, *señor*, overlook it. Literature is a tender point with him. He has lost one hundred and fifty-four dollars and forty-seven cents on an unprofitable literary venture. In fact, he is a young author."

He nodded confidentially at the prefect.

The official, with Latin delicacy, nodded back and patted Pethwick's arm to show that all was again well. Pethwick then said aloud—

"So we shall have to try to find our own way into the Valle de Rio Infiernillo?"

Ramada looked worried. Presently he slapped his hand on a mahogany sword cabinet that glowed warmly in the subdued light of the *salle*.

"*Señores!*" he cried, rattling the letter of introduction with his left hand. "It shall never be said that the prefect of the department of Ayacucho did not exert plenary powers to aid in disclosing to the world the enormous riches of his province and his native land!"

"So we may expect something?" inquired M. Demetrioivich.

"I have the power to force some one to go with you," announced Ramada dramatically.

"Who?" asked Standifer, looking around.

"Naturally my authority does not extend over freemen," conditioned the prefect.

"Your slaves?" inquired the secretary.

"Sir," announced the prefect, "wherever the Peruvian banner waves, Freedom smiles!"

"What at?" inquired the literal secretary.

As the governor was about to take new offense the old Rumanian hastily inquired—

"Who do we get, Señor Ramada?"

"*Señores*, a garroting has been widely and I believe successfully advertized to take place on the fifth of August. If I may say it, *caballeros*, my political career depends in great measure on meeting fully and completely the thrills offered by my prospectuses. The executions will be followed by a bull-fight. It was, gentlemen, if I may say it, it was to be the turning-point of my political career, upon the prestige of which I meant to make my race for the presidency of our republic.

"Gentlemen, a time comes in the life of every statesmen when he can sacrifice his country to his personal ambition, or his personal ambition to his country. That moment has now come in the life of Gonzales Pizarro Ramada. Gentlemen, I make it. Gentlemen, I am going to remit the extreme penalty placed by the *cortes* upon a murderer and a highwayman and permit them to go with you, gentlemen, as guides into the Valle de Rio Infernillo."

Pethwick, who had been smiling with immense enjoyment at this rodomontade straightened his face.

"A murderer and a highwayman!"

"Charming fellows," assured the pre-

fect. "I often walk down to the *carcel* and converse with them, I and the padre. Such *chic!* Such original ideas on the confiscation of money—really very entertaining!"

The expedition looked at the eulogist a moment.

"Give us a minute to talk this over, Señor Ramada?" requested M. Demetrioivich.

The prefect made the accentuated bow of a politician, adding that the republic would be proud to furnish chains and handcuffs to guarantee that her sons did their duty in the discharge of a patriotic function.

The three gentlemen of the DeLong Geographical Expedition spent an anxious five minutes in debate.

Presently Pethwick called—

"Señor Ramada, are you absolutely sure that we can not procure guides who are less—questionable for this journey?"

"Gentlemen, to be frank," said the prefect, who had also been studying over the matter, "I doubt very much whether either Cesare Ruano or Pablo Pasca would be willing to accompany you under those terms. I can not force them. The law prohibits any unusual or cruel infliction of the death penalty and to send them to the valley of the Rio Infernillo would fall under that prohibition."

The four men stood meditating in the Salle des Armes. Professor Demetrioivich stirred.

"Let's go have a talk with them," he suggested.

CONTRARY to Ramada's fears, Cesare Ruano, the man-killer, and Pablo Pasco, the road-agent, proved willing to escort the party to the Rio Infernillo. So on the following day the expedition set forth with the legs of the convicts chained under their mules' bellies.

Ayacucho turned out *en masse* to watch the departure of so distinguished a cavalcade, and it might as well be admitted at once that none of the adventurers made so brave a showing or saluted the villagers with more graceful bows than did Cesare Ruano or Pablo Pasca. In fact, they divided the plaudits of the crowd about equally with the prefect, who kept murmuring to Pethwick—

"Not a bad stroke, Señor Pethwick, not a bad stroke."

The legs of the convicts were chained, naturally, to prevent any sudden leaving, but the plan held disadvantages. When one of the llama-packs became loosened, either the scientists had to bungle the job themselves or take the leg-cuffs off their prisoners and allow them to dismount and do it for them. This entailed endless unchaining and chaining, which quickly grew monotonous and at length was abandoned after the geographers had exacted a solemn pledge of the two cutthroats not to run away. That much of the contract the guides kept to the letter. They never did run away, although the company lost them.

M. Demetrioovich retained the manacles on the horn of his saddle, where, he told Pethwick, he hoped their jingle would have a good moral effect.

Oddly enough both the convicts were entirely innocent of the charges preferred against them, upon which they were convicted and so nearly executed.

Pablo Pasca told the whole circumstance to Pethwick. He, Pablo, did meet an old man one freezing July night in a mountain pass on the road to Ayacucho. They stopped and held some converse and Pablo had borrowed from him two hundred and forty-seven sols. Then what did this ingrate of a creditor do but beat his head against a tree, break an arm, go before a *magistrado* and charge Pasca with highway robbery.

Pablo's black eyes flashed as he related the incident. He had been amazed at such calumny, which he could not disprove. The jury believed the old wretch and sentenced Pablo to the garrote.

However, the One Who Ruled the Earth knew the truth, and Pasca prayed every night that he should not have his spinal cord snapped on such an unjust charge. So the One Who Ruled sent this society of fine gentlemen and scholars to fraternize with Pablo and to lift him to an exalted station. So he, Pablo, suppose now all the neighbors saw that his oath, as strange as it sounded, was true to the last jot and tittle. The padre in his visits to the *carcel* had taught Pablo a little verse which he should never forget—"Seest thou a man diligent in his profession—he shall sit before kings."

Cesare Ruano did not go so much into detail as did his fellow guide and friend, but he told Pethwick that the crime for which he was sentenced to the garrote was trivial and with a shrug of his shoulders let it go at that.

The trivial affair, however, had left a number of marks on Ruano's person, all of which the Ayacucho police had tabulated. A copy of this table was given M. Demetrioovich in order that he might advertize for Cesare in case he should desert.

Pethwick read the inventory. It ran:

Cesare Ruano, a *cholo*, 27 years, reddish yellow, height 5 ft. 7 in., weight 84 kilos (189 lbs.), muscular, broad face, prominent cheekbones, straight nose with wide nostrils, very white teeth, handsome. Scars: from right eyebrow through the right cheek to lobe of ear; from left side of neck to middle of chestbone; horizontal scar from nipple to nipple; rifle or pistol wound in right leg, two inches above knee; three buckshot in back, one in left buttock; little toe on left foot missing. Disposition: uncommunicative, but of pleasant address and cheerful until irritated. A very handy man. Note: In case of arrest, officers are advised to shoot before accosting Ruano.

ON the first few nights the travelers found lodgings at little mountain inns, whose red-peaked roofs of tiles were pulled down like caps over tiny eye-like windows. The tunnel-like entrance to such a hostelry always looked like a black mouth squared in horror at something it saw across the mountains.

This was much the same expression that the proprietor and guests wore when they learned the travelers were bound for the Rio Infernillo.

Pablo Pasca always broke the news of their destination in rather dramatic style to the gamblers and hangers-on with which these centers of mountain life were crowded.

"Señores," he would harangue, "you see before you a man sentenced to death; but because no garrote could affect his throat, so hard has it become from drinking gin, the prefect decided to send him on a journey to the Rio Infernillo! Let us drink to our good fortune!"

This announcement usually brought roars of applause and laughter. Once a roisterer shouted—

"But your companions; what caused them to be sent?"

"And Pablo answered with a droll gesture—

"One is a murderer; the rest are Americans!"

It made a great hit. The crowd invited Pablo to share its brandy.

However, after these introductions the landlord would presently stop laughing and after some questions invariably warned the scientists against their "mad undertaking." On two such occasions the proprietor became so earnest and excited that he begged the *señores* to walk out with him up the mountain-side to see for themselves the terrors that confronted them.

Pethwick never forgot his first glimpse of the mystery that colored his thoughts and dreams for the remainder of his life.

The night was clear but moonless. The party climbed uncertainly in darkness up a scarp of boulders and spurs of primitive rock. The landlord picked his way toward a clump of calisaya trees silhouetted against the sky. The chill air was shot with the fragrance of mountain violets. The climbers lent each other hands until the landlord reached a protruding root and then everybody scrambled up.

Pethwick dropped down breathless at the foot of the tree, his heart beating heavily, for he was unaccustomed to the altitude. At first he was faintly amused at his host's promise of a portent, but this amusement vanished presently amid the solemnity of night and the mountains.

The very stars above him wore the strange aspect of the Southern constellations. Against their glimmer the Andes heaved mighty shoulders. Peak beyond peak, they stood in cold blackness, made more chill and mysterious by the pallor of snow-fields.

The whole group shivered in silence for several minutes. At last M. Demetrioich asked with a shake in his Spanish—

"Well, *amigo*, what is there to see?"

"Wait," begged the landlord.

At that moment a star shot far out against the blackness.

"*Allá!*" gasped the Peruvian.

Pethwick shivered and grinned. He had brought them up to see a shooting star.

"But wait!" begged the host, sensing the engineer's mirth.

Almost at once from where the star seemed to strike arose a faint, glowing haze as indefinite as the Milky Way. It must have been miles distant. In front of it two or three massifs were outlined and others, farther away, were dimly truncated by its radiance.

The *huésped* drew a long breath.

"Now there lies the Rio Infiernillo," he chattered. "It is a land from which no man returns alive. I have known many men to go, *señores*, thinking surely there must be great treasure where so much danger lay—and there may be, *señores*. No man can say. Every man has his opinion about the matter. I will tell frankly what mine is——"

He paused, evidently waiting for some one to urge his opinion.

Instead, Standifer spoke up—

"My opinion is it's a meteor and a phosphorescent display which sometimes follows."

The landlord laughed through the darkness with immense scorn of such a puerile opinion.

"What is yours?" inquired Pethwick.

"*Señores*," defined the tavern-keeper solemnly, "that stream is called the Rio Infiernillo for a very good reason. For there every night comes the devil to dig gold to corrupt the priests, and—and, of course, the Protestants, too," he added charitably. "But he can never do it, *señores*. Let him dig till he scoops down the mountains and reaches his own country, which is the source of the Rio Infiernillo—he will never do it!"

"Has any one ever seen where he has dug?" asked Pethwick, amused again.

"*Sí, señor.*"

"In the valley?"

"*Precisamente, señor.*"

"I thought you said no one ever went over there and got back alive," observed Pethwick carelessly.

A slight pause; then the landlord explained:

"This man only lived a few minutes after he fell into my door. I saw him. His hair was white. He was burned. I heard his last words. No one else heard him."

This was uttered with such solemnity that Pethwick never knew whether it

was an account of some weird tragedy of the mountains or whether it was cut out of whole cloth.

That night after Pethwick had gone to bed in the upper story of the hostelry, while the laughing and drinking flowed steadily below, it occurred to him that it was odd, after all, that the landlord should have led them on such a clamber to see a shooting star and a haze—and the two phenomena should have occurred so promptly.

ON the following night another landlord led them out on the same mission and showed them the same set of wonders. His explanation was even more fantastic than the first.

Before the party retired that second night, Pethwick asked of M. Demetrio-vich—

"Professor, what is the probability that two meteors should perform the same evolutions in the same quarter of the sky and apparently strike in about the same place on two nights in succession?"

"I'd thought of that problem," returned the savant, yawning. "In fact, I have set down some tentative figures on the subject." Here he referred to a little note-book. "It is roughly one chance in two million."

"Small," observed Pethwick.

"That was for the stars alone. For two stars to fall in the same region, each time followed by a phosphorescence, diminishes the probability to one chance in eight trillion."

Pethwick whistled softly.

"In fact, it was not a meteorite we saw," concluded the professor, crawling into bed.

II

PABLO PASCA shouted something from perhaps a hundred yards up the trail. He was hidden from the string of toiling riders by a fold in the precipice. Pethwick looked ahead and saw two vultures launch themselves out over the abyss. One swung back down the face of the mountain and passed within forty feet of the party, its feathers whistling, its bald, whitish head turning for a look at the intruders and its odor momentarily tainting the cold wind.

A moment later the engineer saw the two guides had dismounted and their mules were snorting and jerking on the very edge of the precipice. The men themselves were staring at something and Pasca seemed almost as panic-stricken as the animals. The unquietness spread rapidly down the string of baggage-carriers.

Pethwick slid off his mount and hurried forward, slipping inside the llamas and dodging past the uncertain heels of the mules. He came out by the side of Pablo to a queer, not to say gruesome, sight.

In the air circled eight or ten vultures. They had been frightened from a row of skeletons, which evidently were articulated on wires and iron rods and stood before the travelers in the awkward postures such objects assume. Among the things, Pethwick recognized the whitened frames of a snake, condor, sheep, vicuña, puma, monkey and at the end, standing upright, the bones of a man.

The specimens were accurately spaced around the end of the trail, for this was the end of the trail. The skulls grinned fixedly at the DeLong Geographical Expedition. In the gusty wind the arm of the man swung and beat against his thigh bone in a grotesque travesty of mirth.

Something touched Pethwick from behind. He turned with a shudder and saw Standifer. The secretary of the expedition looked at the assemblage for a moment, then drew out his note-book and pen, gave the pen a flip to start a flow of ink and methodically jotted down the list before him. When he had finished he glanced up inquiringly as he rescrewed the top on his writing instrument.

"Don't suppose any one is moving a museum, eh, Pethwick?"

"No," said the engineer, studying the figures.

"You don't think so?" surprised.

"Certainly not!"

"Huh!" Standifer drew forth his book again. "Makes a sort of little mystery of it, doesn't it?"

And he jotted this fact down.

Prof. Demetrio-vich joined his companions as the secretary made his obser-

vation on the probable source of the objects before them.

"Standifer's hypothesis is not as bad as it sounds, Pethwick," observed the sayant.

"You don't mean these really belong to some scientist?" cried the engineer.

"I think their arrangement proves it."

The engineer looked at the professor curiously.

"These skeletons are arranged in the order of their evolutionary development."

A glance showed this to be the case and it rather surprized Pethwick.

"Does that hold any significance?"

M. Demetrioivich walked over to the frame of the puma and shook it slightly as he inspected it.

"It would suggest a scientist arranged these specimens. A savage or a rustic would have been more likely to have strung them out according to size, or else he would have mixed them higgledy-piggledy, and the probability that he would have hit on their evolutionary order would have been remote indeed." The professor gave the puma's bones another shake. "Besides that, this articulation is very cleverly done—too cleverly for unpractised hands."

"But why should a scientist leave his specimens out like this?" demanded the engineer in amazement.

"To begin with, this seems to be the end of the trail—the shipping-point, so to speak, and for the further reason that water boils at a very low temperature at this altitude."

As the professor's fingers had touched some particles of flesh still adhering to the puma's vertebrae, he stepped across to a little patch of snow, stooped and washed his hands in it.

His two companions stared at him.

"Water boiling at a low temperature—altitude—what's that got to do with it?" interrogated the engineer.

The scientist smiled.

"I thought you would see that. If boiling water is too cool to clean the bones properly, here are some very trustworthy assistants above us."

M. Demetrioivich indicated the vultures still circling overhead.

The secretary, who had been scribbling rapidly during the last part of this dis-

course, now crossed out a few lines on a former page with the remark—

"Well, there is no mystery to it after all."

"But look here!" exclaimed Pethwick. "We're scooped!"

"What do you mean—scooped?" asked the old Rumanian.

"Somebody has beaten us to this field. There are rival explorers in these mountains."

"Tut, tut," chided the old man. "You should say, my dear Pethwick, we have 'colleagues' instead of 'rivals.' I am charmed to believe they are here. We must get in touch with them and try to be of assistance to them."

The kindly old scientist stared away among the great bluish peaks, speculating on where his "colleagues" could be.

"But look here," objected Standifer in alarm; "there will be another secretary with that expedition, grabbing all this literary material——"

"Lads, lads," reproached the old sayant, "you have yet to learn the opulence of nature. She is inexhaustible. This party, another party, fifty parties toiling at the same time could never fathom all the marvels that lie under the sweep of our gaze. Why, gentlemen, for example, in Bucharest I and a colleague worked for three years on the relation of the olfactory system of catarrhine monkeys with that of human beings. Our effort was to approximate in what epoch the sense of smell became of secondary importance to humanity. This, of course, would mark a great change in the mode of living among men."

"As I say, we spent three years on the two nervous systems and yet our discoveries were most dissimilar. Now, what are a few white nerve-threads to all this wilderness of snow and boulders? Your fears are quite baseless."

HIS two companions laughed, half ashamed of their jealousy, and then inspected the scene before them, which up till now had been lost in the grizzly detail of the skeletons.

The mountainside on which they stood dropped away in an enormous declivity fully a mile and a half deep and led into a vast and sinister valley that stretched toward the northeast until its

folds and twists were lost among the flashing peaks.

The extraordinary part of the scene was that instead of spreading the vivid green of the tropics below the tree-line this great depression looked black and burned. The ensemble recalled to Pethwick certain remarkable erosions he had seen in the West of the United States. Only here, the features were slashed out with a gigantism that dwarfed our Western cañons and buttes.

And there was another striking difference. In the North American West the Grand Cañon, the Yosemite, glow with a solemn beauty. This chasm looked like the raw and terrible wound of fire. Its blackened and twisted acclivities might have been the scars of some terrible torment.

A river lay through the center of this cicatrix and although later it proved nearly half a mile wide it was reduced to a mere rivulet amid such cyclopean setting. It twisted in and out, now lost to view, now shimmering in the distance, everywhere taking the color of its surroundings and looking for the world like one of those dull, spreading adders winding through the valley, poison from fang to sting.

Pethwick now fully understood why the Indians had given the peculiar name to the river. It was a sobriquet any human being would have bestowed upon it at first glimpse. It required no guide to tell Pethwick he was looking down upon the Rio Infiernillo.

"This is the place, *señor*," said Pablo Pasca. "Do we start back from here?"

Pethwick looked at him in surprise.

"We'll spend the next sixty days in this valley."

"I mean Cesare and myself, *señor*," explained the Zambo in hand-dog fashion. "You and Cesare!"

"We have showed you the Valley of the Rio Infiernillo—that was all we promised, *señor*," pursued Pablo doggedly.

Ruano glanced around. "Speak for yourself, Pablo!"

"You are not going on into this den of Satan, are you?" cried Pablo to the murderer. "Past these—these——" He nodded at the skeletons.

Ruano grinned, showing two rows of

big white teeth, "I'll go help make some more skeletons," he said carelessly.

Pethwick began to explain away Pasca's fears.

"Those are nothing but the specimens of a scientific expedition, Pablo."

"Do scientific expeditions collect skeletons?" shuddered the thief.

"Yes."

"Will you do that?"

"Very probably."

"And leave them for the birds to pick?"

"If we don't boil them." Pethwick grew more amused as the fears of his guide mounted.

"*Mio Dios!* What for?"

"To study them," laughed the engineer.

Pablo turned a grayish yellow.

"And you kill men, and let the buzzards pick their bones—to study them!" aspirated the half-breed. "Will you kill me—and Ruano?"

"Certainly not!" ejaculated Pethwick, quite shocked. "What a silly idea!"

"But the other gang did, *señor*," cried the Zambo, nodding at the skeleton of the man at the end of the line, "and no doubt, *señor*, they told their guide that all was well, that everything was as it should be, until one fine day—*bang!*"

"And here he stands, grinning at me, slapping his knee to see another big fool go spraddling down the scarp."

At such a hideous suspicion all three scientists began a shocked denial.

What did Pablo take them for—ghouls? They were civilized men, scientists, professors, engineers, authors.

"Then why did you choose for guides two men condemned to death unless it was to kill them and stay within the law?"

They reassured the robber so earnestly that he was half convinced, when unfortunately an extra gust of wind set the skeleton clapping his knee again.

The gruesome mirth set Pablo almost in a frenzy.

"*Ehue!* Yes! But how did the other party get their man? He came from somewhere! No doubt they found a dead man in this devil's country! Oh, yes; dead men are frequent in this place where men never go! They didn't kill their guide to study his bones. Oh, no!

Not at all! Ha! No! He dropped dead. Very reasonable! Ho!"

With a yell he dropped his mule's rein and leaped for the mouth of the trail.

BUT Cesare Ruano was quicker than the thief. The murderer made one leap, caught the flying Zambo by the shoulder and brought him in a huddle on the stones.

The robber shrieked, screamed, began a chattering prayer.

"Oh, Holy Mary! Blessed Virgin! Receive my soul! I am to be killed! Blessed Queen!"

The words seemed to arouse some sort of anger in Cesare, for the big fellow shook Pablo till his teeth rattled.

"Shut up squeaking, you rabbit! Can't you tell when a man is about to murder you? These are gentlemen! You will stay with this party, coward, and do the work! You will help me! I will not leave them and neither will you. *Sabe?*"

As he accented this "*Sabe?*" with a violent shake, Pablo's head nodded vigorously whether he wanted it to or not.

Oddly enough this trouncing seemed to reassure Pasca more than all the arguments of the scientists.

"You are a shrewd man, Cesare," he gasped as soon as he was allowed to speak. "Are you sure they won't hurt us?"

Ruano laughed again, with a flash of teeth.

"They can't hurt me. I could mash these little men with my thumb. Who are you afraid of, Pablo—the old, gray man who can hardly walk?"

"Why, no," admitted the thief, looking at M. Demetrioivich.

"Or of that bean-pole boy, whose head is so weak he can not remember the simplest thing without writing it in a book?"

"Nor him either," agreed Pablo with a glance at Standifer.

"Or the engineer who can not lift a hand without gasping for breath?"

"Anyway," argued Pasca, half convinced, "how did those other geographers manage to kill their guide? Perhaps they shot him when he was asleep."

"They were not geographers," snapped

Ruano; "at least they were not like these men."

"How do you know?"

"Could another such a party be in the mountains and all the country not hear of it? Even in prison we heard the great American scientists were going to the Rio Infiernillo. Then take these men—would they tie all these bones together if they wanted to pack them on llamas to Ayacucho? You know they would not. They would take them apart and put them in sacks until they reached America."

"Why, that's a fact," agreed Pasca, staring at the skeletons with new interest. "Certainly no llama would carry one of those things." He stared a moment longer and added: "But perhaps those other scientists were also fools and did not think of that."

"Then they would not have had wit enough to kill their guide. It takes some wit to kill a man, Pablo, I assure you."

Naturally the geographers had been listening to this very candid opinion of their party. Now M. Demetrioivich inquired, not without a certain respect in his voice:

"Señor Ruano, I may be wrong in my judgment. How do you think those skeletons came here?"

"Señor," returned the convict respectfully, "this is the Rio Infiernillo. I think the devil put them here to scare men away; so they can not look into hell while they are alive. Because if they had a look, *señor*, it would be so horrible they would change their lives, become good men and go to heaven—and so the devil would lose patronage."

Standifer, who was chagrined with Ruano's description of himself, grunted out the word "barbarous." Pethwick shouted with laughter.

With a blush Standifer drew out his note-book. As he did so, he said to Cesare:

"These entries are made, not because I lack intelligence, as you seem to think, but because I am the official secretary of this expedition; besides I am an author. I wrote a book called "Reindeer in Iceland."

A fit of coughing seized Pethwick.

"I meant nothing by what I said,

Señor Standifer," explained Ruano, "except to hearten this rabbit. Think nothing of it." He turned to the crowd as a whole. "We will never get the mules and llamas past the skeletons, so we will have to remove the skeletons past the mules and llamas."

This plan recommended itself to the whole party and everybody set to work. The men lugged the things past the trembling animals and finally lined them up behind the cavalcade. They placed the human frame at the head of the troop, just as they had found it.

As Pethwick rode away he looked back at it. There it stood representing the summit of creation, the masterpiece of life. It rattled its phalanges against its femur and grinned a long-toothed grin at the vast joke of existence—an evolutionary climb of a hundred million years, a day or two of sunshine, a night or two of sleep, a little stirring, a little looking around, and—*poof!* back it was where it had started a hundred million years ago. No wonder skeletons grin.

ON the forward journey it transpired that Cesare Ruano had obtained a sort of moral ascendancy over the whole party.

He certainly had set the crowd straight about the skeletons. They had talked for an hour to decide where they came from and in half a dozen words Cesare proved to them they knew nothing about the matter whatsoever.

Another thing that gave Cesare prestige was his abrupt quelling of Pasca's desertion. Without Cesare the Zambo would have escaped. None of the scientists would have acted in time to stop his headlong flight.

Civilization has the unfortunate effect of slowing up men's mental operations in emergencies. Indeed, civilization places such a premium on foresight that a civilized man lacks ability to live from instant to instant. The ordinary American lives usually in next month or next year, but he is rarely at home in the "now" and "here."

This quality of concentration on the future is a splendid thing for developing inventions, building great businesses, painting great pictures, writing novels and philosophies, but it works badly in-

deed for guarding convicts, who invariably bolt in the present tense.

Cesare used his new authority to possess himself of a rifle.

"We don't know just who shot that skeleton," he explained very simply to M. Demetrioovich, "and we don't know how many more skeletons the fellow may want. I prefer to keep mine. Now I have observed that you *señores* never glance about when you travel, but look straight into your mules' ears and think of many great things, no doubt. But this fellow could collect your skeletons very easily. So I will take a rifle and ride before and shoot whoever it is before he shoots us."

Ruano chose Standifer's rifle for this task. The secretary was glad of it, for the weapon had been chafing his leg ever since the party left Ayacucho.

The immediate declivity leading into the valley of the Rio Infiernillo was a field of boulders ranging in size from a man's head to a house. Far below them the tree-line was marked by some small trees that had been tortured by the wind, into the grotesque shapes worked out by the Japanese in their dwarf trees. Here and there patches of snow disguised their precarious footing into white pitfalls.

The mules crept downward, exploring every step of the way with their little hoofs, then easing their weight forward. It made a very swaying, chafing ride. Pethwick's pommel worked against his stomach until he felt he had been sitting down a week, wrong side first.

After an endless jostle it seemed to the engineer that he was not descending in the slightest, but was being shaken back and forth, sticking in one place amid the cyclopean scenery. When he looked back, the endless boulder-field slanted toward the sky; when he looked down, it seemed as far as ever into the black and sinister valley where the river wound like an adder.

He looked to reaching the tree-line with a hope it would bring him relief from the monotony. It did not. His saddle chafed, his mule sagged and swayed. His fellow scientists did as he was doing, squirmed about on the torturing saddle-horns. The sameness drove his mind in on itself. He began,

as Cesare had said, "to stare into his mule's ears and think."

He wondered about the skeletons. He wondered what "trivial" thing Cesare had done to get sentenced to the garrote. He wondered what that shooting star and the phosphorescent mist could have been? Then he wondered about the skeletons again . . . about Cesare. . . .

A rifle-shot that sounded like a mere snap in the thin mountain air disturbed his reflections. He looked up and saw a faint wisp of vapor float out of the .30-30 in Cesare's hands. The engineer glanced about anxiously to see if the murderer had shot any of his companions. They were all on their mules and all looking at each other and at him. Every one in the crowd had felt instinctively that the desperado had fired at some person, possibly at one of his own party.

"Who is it?" cried Standifer.

"A man down yonder!" Pablo pointed.

"I don't know whether it was a man or not!" cried Ruano, jumping from his slow mule and setting off down the declivity at a hazardous run.

"Ruano!" shouted M. Demetrioivich in horror. "Did you shoot at a human being like that? Drop that rifle, you bloodthirsty fellow! Drop it!"

Extraordinary to say, Cesare did drop his gun and as it struck the stones it fired again. The man plunged on downward at full tilt. It was an amazing flight. He took the boulders like a goat. The party stopped their mounts and sat watching the dash.

"Did you say it was a man?" asked the secretary shakily of Pablo.

"As sure as I am sitting here." At that moment, the flying Ruano swung in behind a huge boulder.

"He was behind that!" cried Pablo sharply. Then he lifted his voice. "Did you get him, Cesare?" he shouted. "Was there any money on him?"

But almost immediately Pethwick glimpsed the murderer again, in fact, saw him twice—or he may have caught a flash of two figures, one chasing the other.

SUDDENLY Pablo began yelling as if on a fox-course.

A shock of horror went through Peth-

wick. He knew too well what the convict would do if he caught the man. Nobody could waylay Cesare Ruano, even to look at him, in safety.

"Here, let's get down there!" cried the engineer in urgent tones. "Lord, we ought not to have given that brute a gun!"

"Maybe he hit him!" surmised Pablo in cheerful excitement.

"He's chasing him this minute somewhere behind those boulders!" declared Standifer nervously.

M. Demetrioivich dismounted and from between two boulders recovered Standifer's rifle as they passed it.

Pethwick had screwed up his nerves for some dreadful sight behind the boulder, but there was nothing there. Nothing except a splotch of green liquid on the stones.

Smaller goutts of this green fluid led off down the boulder-field, making from one large boulder to another as if some dripping thing had tried to keep a covert between itself and the party of riders.

Pethwick dismounted and followed this trail perhaps a hundred yards, until it ceased. Then he stood looking about him in the cold sunshine. He could not hear the slightest sound. The blackened valley and the Infernal River lay far below him. High above him, at the end of the trail, the vultures wheeled against the sky.

III

FROM his headlong pursuit down the mountain-side Cesare Ruano never returned.

What became of him none of his companions ever discovered. He dropped out of their lives as suddenly and completely as if he had dissolved into air.

A dozen possibilities besieged their brains. Perhaps he fell over a cliff. Or was drowned in the river. Or he may have deserted the expedition. Perhaps he was still wandering about, lost or crazed. Perhaps the man he pursued turned and killed him.

All these were pure conjectures, for they had not a clue upon which to base a rational hypothesis. The only hope for a suggestion, the green splotches on the boulders, proved to be hopeless riddles themselves.

The men picked up several of the smaller boulders and when camp was pitched Prof. Demetrioovich made a chemical analysis of the stain. Its coloring-matter was derived from chlorophyll. If Ruano's shot had penetrated the stomach of some ruminating animal, it was barely possible for such a stain to have resulted—but it was improbable. This stain was free from cellular vegetal structure. In the mixture was no trace of the corpuscles or serum of blood.

On the afternoon of the second day following the incident, the men sat at the dinner-table discussing the matter.

In the tent beside the rude dining-table were cots and another table holding specimens, mineral, floral and some insects. Two or three books were scattered on the cots and duffle-bags jammed the tent corners.

Looking out through the flaps of their tent, the diners could see the eastern peaks and cliffs of the Infernal Valley turning orange under the sunset.

M. Demetrioovich was talking.

"I consider the chlorophyll an added proof that there is another scientific expedition in this valley."

"What is your reasoning?" inquired Pethwick.

"Chlorophyll is a substance none but a chemist could, or rather would, procure. It serves no commercial purpose. Therefore it must be used experimentally."

"Why would a chemist want to experiment in this forsaken place?"

Standifer put in a question—

"Then you think Cesare shot a hole in a canister of chlorophyll solution?"

"When a man has a choice of improbabilities, all he can do is to choose the least improbable," explained M. Demetrioovich friendly.

"I wonder what Cesare would say about it?" speculated Pethwick.

"The green trail also suggests my theory," proceeded Prof. Demetrioovich. "When Ruano shot the man behind the boulder, his victim evidently did not know that his can of solution had been punctured, for he sat hidden for perhaps a minute while his container leaked a large pool just behind the rock. When Cesare charged, the fellow fled, losing small quantities as the liquid splashed out. At last the man observed

the puncture and turned the can over, and there the trail ended."

M. Demetrioovich pushed his coffee cup toward Pablo without interrupting his deductions.

"I should say Cesare's bullet entered the can about an inch below the level of the liquid. That would explain why a continuous trail did not mark the fugitive."

"But why would one scientist be ambushing civilized men in a heaven-forsaken place like this!" cried Standifer in slightly supercilious tones. "And why should he carry a canister of chlorophyll around with him?"

Pethwick tapped the table with his fingers.

"It's unfair to demand the fellow's occupation, race, color and previous condition of servitude," he objected. Then, after a moment: "I wish we could find Ruano——"

M. Demetrioovich stirred his coffee and looked into it without drinking, a Latin habit he had formed in the Rumanian cafés.

"If I may be so bold, señores," put in Pablo Pasca, "a scientist—a lone scientist would go crazy in a place like this."

This remark, while as improbable as the other guesses, nevertheless spread its suggestion of tragedy over the situation.

"Nobody knows the action of chlorophyll exactly," brooded M. Demetrioovich. "Somehow it crystalizes the energy in sunlight. If some man had developed a method to bottle the sun's energy directly, he would probably pursue his investigations in the tropics——"

"And he might desire secrecy," added Pethwick, "so much so that he would even——"

"You mean he would murder Cesare?" finished Standifer.

"A certain type of scientific mind might do that, gentlemen," agreed M. Demetrioovich gravely.

"What sort, professor?"

"There are only a few countries in the world capable of producing a chemist who could experiment with chlorophyll and sunlight——"

The diners looked at the old scientist expectantly.

"Of these, I know only one country whose national creed is ruthlessness, only

one whose chemists would kill an Indian on the bare possibility that the Indian might divulge his secret process—or his political affiliations."

"You mean he could be a German royalist?" queried Pethwick.

"If the Germans could synthesize the sun's energy and thus transform it directly into food, they would certainly be in a position to bid again for world dominion," stated M. Demetrio-vich positively. "It would annul a blockade of the seas. It would render unnecessary millions of men working in the fields and put them on the battle-front."

"But that's fantastic, professor!" cried Pethwick, "that's getting outside of probability."

"The green splotches themselves are outside of probability, Mr. Pethwick," stated the old savant gravely, "but they are here nevertheless."

"The moon is rising," observed Standifer casually.

The secretary's silly and trivial breaks in the conversation irritated Pethwick. He turned and said—

"Well, that doesn't bother me, does it you?"

"Oh, no," said Standifer, taking the rather tart remark in good faith. "I like to watch the moon rise. If I may say it, all my best literary ideas are evolved under the moonlight."

"Trot on out and see if you can't think up something good," suggested the engineer.

Standifer caught this sarcasm, flushed slightly but did get up and walk out through the tent entrance. A moment later the two men followed him, leaving the things to Pablo.

THE rising moon centered their attention with the first glint of its disk between two peaks far down the valley. The last bronze of twilight lingered in the west. The men shivered with the chill of coming night.

Despite Pethwick's jibe at the poetical influence of the moon as expressed by the secretary, still the engineer felt it himself.

"It looks whiter, more silvery in this latitude," he observed after a continued silence.

"That mist about it looks like the veil of a bride," mused the author.

"May do it," said the engineer, who despised similes, "but it looks more like a mist around the moon."

"What's the matter with you anyway, Pethwick?" snapped Standifer, wheeling around. "Just because you lack the gift of poetical expression is no reason you should make an ass of yourself and bray every time I utter a well-turned phrase!"

"Was that what you were doing?" inquired the older man.

"It was, and if——"

Standifer broke off suddenly and stared, then in amazement gasped—

"For Heaven's sake!"

"What is it?" Both the older men followed his gaze.

Standifer was staring into the fading sky utterly bewildered.

Pethwick shook him.

"What is it?"

The secretary pointed skyward.

They followed his finger and saw against the dull west the delicate silver crescent of a new moon.

It required half an instant for the incoherence of their two observations to burst upon them. The next impulse, all three turned.

The full moon they had seen rising in the east had disappeared. The mist, a phosphorescent mist, still hung about the peaks; indeed, it seemed to settle on the distant crags and cliffs and glow faintly in the gathering darkness. It defined a sort of spectral mountain-scape. Then, before their astounded gaze, it faded into darkness.

A scratching sound caused Pethwick to shiver. It was Pablo Pasca striking a match inside the tent.

AFTER his observation of what for want of a better name will have to be called the pseudo-moon, a curious mental apathy fell over Pethwick. Not that he failed to think of the extraordinary series of events that had befallen the expedition. He did think of them all the time. But he thought weakly, hopelessly. He picked up the problem in his brain without the slightest hope of finding the solution. He exhausted himself on the enigma, and yet he could not let it go.

He tried to forget it and center himself on his work. But little mysteries cropped out in his every-day toil. His principal duty with the expedition was map-making, the determination of the altitudes of the various observed peaks, and a mapping of the outcrops of the black micas, limonites, serpentines, pitchblendes, obsidians and hornblendes. It was these dark-colored stones, he found, that gave the great chasm its look of incineration.

And this is what he did not understand. Here and there he found places where streams of lava sprang, apparently, out of the solid escarpment of the cliffs.

Now the whole Peruvian sierras are volcanic and these lava pockets did not surprise Pethwick. The inexplicable part was that no volcanic vent connected these little fumaroles with the interior of the mountain. They seemed to have been burned from the outside. They looked as if some object of intense heat had branded the mountainside.

Ordinarily Pethwick's mind would have sprung like a terrier at such a problem; now, through sheer brain-fag, he jotted the descriptions without comment. In this dull, soulless way he made the following extraordinary entry into his journal one morning:

This morning, close to one of those burned pockets, or fumaroles, which I have before described, I found a roasted rabbit. The little animal was some twelve feet from the fumarole, sitting upright on its haunches—and roasted. It looked as if its curiosity had been aroused, and it had been cooked instantly. As decomposition had not set in, it could not have been dead for more than a week.

I wonder if this is a tab on the date of these fumaroles? If so, they must have been burned a few days ago, instead of being of geologic antiquity, as I at first assumed. If recent, they must be of artificial origin. Since they roast a rabbit before frightening it, they must occur with the abruptness of an explosion. Can these splotches be connected with the evil mystery surrounding this expedition? I can not say. I have no theory whatever.

THAT evening at dinner Pethwick showed this entry to M. Demetrio-vich. The old Rumanian read it, and his only comment was a nod and a brief—

"Yes, I had discovered they were of recent origin myself."

Presently he suggested a game of chess

to take their minds off the matter before they retired.

"You look strained, Pethwick," said the old man.

The engineer laughed briefly.

"I am strained. I'm jumpy every minute of the day and night."

The old savant considered his friend with concern.

"Wouldn't you better get out of here for a while, Herbert?"

"What's the use? I could think of nothing else."

"You would feel out of danger."

"I don't feel in danger."

"Yes, you do—all mystery connotes danger. It suggests it to us. That is why mystery is so stimulating and fascinating."

"Do you think we are in danger?"

"I am sure the man who killed Cesare would not hesitate over us."

Standifer, who was seated at the table, began to smile in a superior manner at their fears.

Owing to the engineer's nervous condition this irritated Pethwick acutely. However, he said nothing about it, but remarked to M. Demetrio-vich—

"Tomorrow I am through with my work right around here."

"Then you'll take a rest, as I suggest."

"No, I'll take a pack, walk straight down this valley and find out what is making these fumaroles—and what became of Cesare."

At that moment, in the gathering blue of night, the eastern sky was lighted by the glare of the pseudo-moon. Its pallor poured in through the tent-flaps and the shadows of the men's legs streaked the floor.

The mystery brought both the older men to the outside. They stared at the illumination in silence. The light was as noiseless as the aurora. As they watched it, Pethwick heard Standifer laughing inside the tent.

The secretary's idiocy almost snapped the engineer's control. He wanted to knock his empty head. At last the phenomenon died away and left its usual glimmer on the surrounding heights. In a few minutes this vanished and it was full night.

When the men reentered the tent, Standifer still smiled as if he enjoyed

some immunity from their mystification and nervousness.

"Well, what's the joke?" asked Pethwick at last.

"The way you fellows go up in the air about this thing."

"You, I suppose, are on solid ground!" exploded Pethwick.

The author said nothing but continued his idiotic smile.

"I admit there are points here and there I don't understand," continued Pethwick after a moment. "No doubt we fail to understand it as thoroughly as you do."

"You do," agreed Standifer with such matter-of-factness the engineer was really surprised.

"What in the devil have you found out?" he asked irritably.

"Oh, the facts, the facts," said Standifer nonchalantly. "I'm a writer, you know, a trained observer; I dive to the bottom of things."

Pethwick stared, then laughed in a chattering fashion—

"Y-Yes, I see you diving to the bottom of this——"

The old professor, who had been studying the secretary, quietly interrupted—

"What do you know, James?"

The literary light hesitated a moment, then drew a handful of glittering metal out of his pocket and plunked it down on the table.

"I know all about it," he said and grinned in spite of himself.

The men stared. Pablo Pasca paused in his journeys to and from the kitchen tent to stare at the boy and the gold.

"Know all about what?" cut in Pethwick jumpily. "The gold or the mystery?"

"Both."

Suddenly Pablo cried—

"I told you, *señorcs*, wealth lies where danger is so great!"

"Have you found a gold mine?" asked M. Demetrioivich.

"No, I sold one of my books."

"Who to—when—where—my Lord; who was the sucker?" Pethwick's questions almost exploded out of him.

"I had no idea my book had such a reputation," beamed the author.

"Youngster, if you'll just cut the lit-

erary twaddle——" quavered Pethwick on edge.

"Well, I had a hunch there must be some very simple explanation for all this skull and cross-bone stuff you fellows were trying to pull. You know that doesn't go in real life. It's only fiction, that resort of the mentally muddled——"

"Standifer! Spill it—if you know anything!"

"Go on, tell it in your own way, Mr. Standifer," encouraged M. Demetrioivich. "You were saying 'mentally muddled.'"

"Sure—yes—well, nothing to it, you know. This life is very simple, once you get the key."

"Lord—doesn't that sound like 'Reindeer in Iceland'!" ground out the engineer.

"What was the light we saw just then, Mr. Standifer?" inquired the savant, who saw that the secretary would never get anywhere unaided.

"A new sort of portable furnace, sir, that extracts and reduces ores on the spot."

"Who runs it?"

"Indians."

"Have you seen any of them?"

"Saw one not three hours ago. Sold him a copy of 'Reindeers in Iceland.'"

Pethwick interrupted the catechism.

"Gave you that much gold for a copy of 'Reindeer in Iceland'—for the whole edition of 'Reindeer in Iceland'!"

"Did you inquire about Cesare?" proceeded M. Demetrioivich.

"Yes, he's working for them."

"Did you think to ask about the chlorophyll?"

"That's used in a secret process of extracting gold."

"You say the men engaged in such a method of mining are *Indians*?"

"The man I saw was an Indian."

"Did you talk to him in English, Spanish, Quicha? What language?"

The secretary hesitated.

"Well—in English, but I had to explain the language to him. I think he knew it once but had forgot."

"A lot of South Americans are educated in the States," observed Pethwick, who by now was listening intently.

"Tell us what happened, Mr. Standifer," requested the old Rumanian.

"WELL, today I was about twelve miles down the valley. I had sat down to eat my lunch when I saw an Indian behind a rock staring at me as if his eyes would pop out of his head. I don't mind admitting it gave me a turn, after the way things have been happening around here. On second glance I thought it was Cesare. I was about to yell and ask when the fellow himself yelled at me—

"Hey, Cesare, is that you?"

"Well, it nearly bowled me over. But I got a grip on my nerves and shouted back, 'No, I'm not Cesare!' And I was about to ask who the fellow was when he took it right out of my mouth and shouted to me, 'Who are you?'

"I told him my name and address, that I was an author and secretary of the DeLong Geographical Expedition; then I asked him to come out and let's have a talk.

"The fellow came out all right, walking up to me, looking hard at me. He was an ordinary Indian with a big head and had on clothes about like Cesare's. In fact, you know it is hard to tell Indians apart. As he came up he asked me the very question I had in mind—

"Do you know Cesare?"

"I said, 'Yes; where is he?'

"He stood looking at me and shook his head.

"I said, 'You don't know,' and he touched his mouth and laughed. Then I guessed that he didn't understand English very well, so I began explaining the language to him.

"He would point at something and say, 'Is that a bird? Is that a stone? Is that a river?' In each case he got it right, but there was always a hesitation, of about a second, perhaps, as if he were thinking, like this: 'Is that a—river?'"

Both the older men were staring intently at the boy as if they were trying to read something behind his words. Pethwick nodded impatiently.

"I am sure," continued Standifer, "the fellow once knew English and it was coming back to him."

"Undoubtedly," from Pethwick.

"Then he saw the corner of my book in my haversack, for I—I sometimes carry my book around to read when I'm

lonely, and he said, 'What is that—"Reindeer in Iceland"?'"

"That joggled me so, I said, 'Yes; how the deuce did you know that?'

"Well, at that he almost laughed himself to death and finally he said just about what was in my mind, 'That has a wider reputation than you imagine,' and he added, 'What is it for?'

"What is what for?' says I.

"Reindeer in Iceland,'" says he.

"To read,' says I. 'It contains facts,' says I. 'It's not like the rotten fiction you pick up.' And with that my whole spiel that I used to put up to the farmers in New York State when I sold my books from door to door came back to me. I thought what a lark it would be to try to sell a copy to an Indian in the Rio Infernillo. 'If I do that,' I thought to myself, 'I'll be the star book-agent of both the Americas.' So I began:

"It's not like the rotten fiction you buy,' says I. 'This volume gives you the truth about reindeer in Iceland; it tells you their food, their strength, their endurance, their value in all the different moneys of the world. It states where are the greatest herds. What reindeer hides are used for. How their meat, milk and cheese taste. How to prepare puddings from their blood. How the bulls fight. Their calls: their love-calls, danger-calls, hunger-calls. How their age may be calculated by the lines on their horns and the rings on their teeth and the set of their tails. In fact, sir,' said I, 'with this little volume in your pocket, it will be impossible for any man, no matter how dishonest he is, to palm off on you an old, decrepit reindeer under the specious representation that he or she is young, agile and tender.

"The price of this invaluable compendium puts it within easy reach of one and all. It will prove of enormous practical and educational value to each and any. It makes little difference whether you mean to rear these graceful, docile animals or not; you need this volume, for as a means of intellectual culture it is unsurpassed. It contains facts, nothing but facts. You need it. Do you want it? Are you progressive? Its price is the only small thing about it—only fifty-four cents. Let me put you down.'

"With that, so strong is the force of habit, I whipped out an old envelope to take his order on.

"What is fifty-four cents?" he asked. "Have I got fifty-four cents?"

"Just what I was wondering," says I. "Turn your pockets wrong side out and I'll see."

"He turned 'em and spilled a lot of metals on the ground. I saw these pieces of gold and told him they would do. I told him I would give him all five of my volumes, for that is the number I brought on this trip, and I'm sorry now I didn't bring more.

"He just pushed the gold over to me without blinking an eye and we traded. I told him where we camped and he said tomorrow he would call and get the other four volumes. And, gentlemen, that is all I know."

At the end of this tale, Standifer leaned back, smiling with pleasure at his sale. The two men sat studying him. At last Pethwick asked—

"You say he knew the title of your book?"

"Yes."

"Was the title showing?"

"No, just a little corner stuck out of the knapsack."

Pethwick considered another moment.

"You at first thought it was Cesare?"

"Yes."

"Did he have a scar on the side of his face?"

"No, I would have noticed that sure. Still, his face was painted very thickly. I couldn't see any scar."

"You are sure it wasn't Cesare?"

"Absolutely sure."

Here M. Demetrioivich took up what might be called the cross-examination.

"You say he didn't understand English at first—could he read the book you sold him?"

"No, that was the odd part. I had to tell him what the letters were and how they made words; how words made sentences. But he caught on the moment I showed him anything and never forgot at all. I tried him."

M. Demetrioivich paused.

"You are sure it was an Indian?"

"Yes."

"But he didn't know the value of gold?"

"Well, I don't know about that," began Standifer.

"Didn't you say he gave you all that money for five dinky little books?" stormed Pethwick.

"Yes, but that doesn't say he doesn't understand——"

"A gold-miner," interrupted M. Demetrioivich, "who is so highly scientific as to employ chlorophyll in a secret process of extracting gold and yet who—doesn't know the value of gold!"

The secretary caressed his glittering pile happily, yawned and slipped it back into his pocket.

"Anyway, I wish I had a cartload of those books down here."

Pethwick sat on his stool clutching his knee to his breast, glaring at the author. Finally he gave a nervous laugh—

"I'm glad you've cleared up the mystery, Standifer."

"Yes; so am I," returned the secretary genially. "I was getting worried about it myself."

"I shouldn't think it would worry you, Standifer." Pethwick gave another shuddery laugh.

"I'm not bad to worry," agreed the secretary heartily.

The engineer sat moistening his dry lips with his tongue while little shivers played through him.

"By the way," he asked after a moment, "did you think to inquire about those skeletons? Is that—cleared up, too?"

"Yes, I did. He said he put them up there to keep the animals away. He said you never knew what sort of animals were about and he didn't want any in till he was ready. He said he put one of every species he could find because each animal was afraid of the skeleton of its own dead."

M. Demetrioivich sat gazing at the boy. A grayness seemed to be drawing over the old man.

"That's a fact," he nodded. "I'd never thought of it before—each animal is afraid of its dead. No skeleton shocks a human being except the skeleton of a man. I suppose it is true of the rest."

"Anyway, it's all cleared up now, Standifer," repeated the engineer with

his chattering laugh. "It is as you say, Standifer: there are no mysteries outside of fiction."

He began laughing, shaking violently. His cachinnations grew louder and wilder. M. Demetrioivich jumped out of his seat, hurried over to his medicine-chest, fixed up a glass of something and with a trembling hand presented it to the engineer. Pethwick drank some and then the old man took a deep swallow himself.

"What's the matter?" asked the secretary, lifting a happy head.

"It's the reaction," shivered the engineer less violently. "You cleared up the mystery—so suddenly— Go on to sleep."

The boy dropped back to his pillow and was off instantly after his long walk.

The two older men sat staring at each other across the little table, their nerves calming somewhat under the influence of the sedative.

"Is it a lie," whispered Pethwick after long thought, "to cover the discovery of gold?"

M. Demetrioivich shook his head.

"That boy hasn't enough imagination to concoct a fragment of his fantastic tale. The thing happened."

"Then, in God's name, what is Cesare going to do to us tomorrow?"

"Cesare would never have given away all that gold," decided the old savant slowly.

"Unless—he means to recoup it all tomorrow."

M. Demetrioivich shook his head.

"Cesare might have put on the paint—he could never have thought up such an elaborate mental disguise. That is far beyond him."

The two men brooded. At last the savant hazarded:

"It may be possible that the Bolsheviks have quit using gold. I believe there is a plan to use time-checks down in their socialistic program."

The engineer jumped another speculation, "The old Incans used gold as a common metal—the old Incans—sun-worshipers, who sacrifice living men to their deity—"

The two scientists sat in silence. From the ice-fields high above the chasm of the Rio Infernillo came a great sighing wind. It breathed in on them out of the

blackness; its cold breath chilled their necks, their hands, their wrists; it breathed on their ankles and spread up under their trousers, chilling their knees and loins.

The men shivered.

IV

PETHWICK awoke out of some sort of nightmare about Incan sun-worshipers. He could hear the groans of victims about to be sacrificed and even after he had shuddered awake his sense of impending calamity persisted. He lifted himself on an elbow and stared about the tent. The sun shining straight into his face, no doubt, had caused his fantasy about the sun-worshipers.

He got to a sitting posture, yawning and blinking his eyes. Outside the day was perfectly still. A bird chirped querulously. In the corral he could hear the llamas snuffling. Then he heard repeated the groan that had disturbed him in his sleep. It came from the secretary's cot.

The engineer glanced across, then came fully awake. Instead of the young author, Pethwick saw an old, white-haired man lying in the cot with the back of his head showing past the blankets. The engineer stared at this thing blankly. A suspicion that Demetrioivich and Standifer had changed cots passed through his mind, but a glance showed him the old savant still asleep on his proper bed.

The engineer got up, stepped across and leaned over this uncanny changeling. It took him a full half-minute to recognize, in the drawn face and white hair of the sleeper, the boy Standifer.

A shock went over the engineer. He put his hand on the author's shoulder.

"Standifer!" he shouted. "Standifer!"

As Standifer did not move, Pethwick called to the professor with an edge of horror in his voice.

The old savant sprang up nervously.

"What is it?"

"Here, look at this boy!"

The scientist stared from his cot, rubbed his eyes and peered.

"Is—that Standifer?"

"Yes."

"What's happened to him?"

"I haven't the slightest idea, professor."

The scientist jabbed feet into slippers and came across the tent. He shook the sleeper gently at first, but gradually increased his energy till the cot squeaked and the strange white head bobbed on the pneumatic pillow.

"Standifer! Standifer!"

But the youth lay inert.

He stripped the covers and the underclothes off the young man. Standifer lay before them naked in the cold morning air; his undeveloped physique looked bluish; then, on the groin of his right leg, Pethwick noticed an inflamed splotch that looked like a severe burn.

M. Demetrioivich turned to his medicine-chest and handed Pethwick an ammonia bottle to hold under the boy's nose while he loaded a hypodermic with strychnin solution. A moment later he discharged it into the patient's arm.

A shudder ran through Standifer at the powerful stimulant. His breathing became better and after a bit he opened his eyes. He looked drowsily at the two faces bending over him and after a minute whispered—

"What's matter?"

"How do you feel?"

"Sleepy. Is it time to get up?"

"Do you ache—hurt?"

The secretary closed his eyes, evidently to take stock of his feelings.

"My head aches. My—my leg burns."

He reached down and touched the inflamed spot.

As the strychnin took firmer hold the boy became alert enough to show surprise at his own state. He eased his sore leg to the floor and sat up on the edge of the cot. Both his companions began a series of questions.

Standifer had no idea what was the matter with him. He had not bruised either his head or his leg. Nothing had happened to him through the night, that he recalled, nor on the preceding day. After a bit, he remembered the sale of his books and drew from under his pillow the gold which he had received.

A thought crossed Pethwick's mind that Pablo Pasca had crept in during the night and had assaulted the sleeper. Demetrioivich took the bag and inspected it. He poured the yellow metal into his palm and examined it, smelled of it

gingerly. Pethwick watched him with some curiosity.

"How did you bring this home yesterday afternoon, James?" queried the old man.

The secretary thought.

"In my pocket."

"In your right trousers pocket?"

Standifer made a movement to place his right and left sides and said—

"Yes."

"Put on your trousers."

The youth did so, working his sore leg carefully inside.

"Put that gold in your pocket. Does it fall directly over the burn?"

Standifer cringed and got the metal out as quickly as possible.

"I should say so."

M. Demetrioivich nodded.

"And you slept with the gold under your pillow last night for safekeeping?"

"Yes."

"Then that did it," diagnosed the scientist.

"But how can gold——"

"The stuff must be poisoned somehow. I'll see if I can find how."

The savant moved to the table containing his chemicals and test-tubes.

TO Pethwick the idea of poisoned gold sounded more like the extravagances of the Middle Ages than a reality occurring in the twentieth century. The engineer stood beside the table and watched the professor pursue his reactions for vegetable and mineral poisons. Standifer limped to the engineer's side. In the silver bowl of an alcohol lamp, the boy caught a reflection of himself. He leaned down and looked at the tiny image curiously. At length he asked—

"Pethwick, is there anything the matter with my hair?"

Then Pethwick realized that the boy did not know his hair was white. And he found, to his surprise, that he hated to tell Standifer. He continued watching the experiment as if he did not hear.

Standifer took up the lamp and by holding its bowl close he got a fair view of his head. He gave a faint gasp and looked about for a mirror. At that instant M. Demetrioivich took the only mirror on the table to condense a vapor floating out of a tube. The old man began talking quickly to the engineer.

"Pethwick, this is the cleverest destructive stroke that the Bolshevists have ever invented."

"What is it?"

"I still don't know, but they have poisoned this gold. They could probably do the same thing to silver. It makes the circulation of money deadly. It will perhaps cause the precious metals to be discarded as media of circulation."

The engineer looked incredulous.

"It's a fact. Do you recall how the report of ground glass in candies cut down the consumption of confectionery? If a large body of men should persistently poison every metal coin that passes through their hands—who would handle coins? Why, gentlemen," he continued as the enormity of the affair grew on him, "this will upset our whole commercial system. It will demonetize gold. No wonder that scoundrel offered our secretary so much gold for a book or two! He wanted to test his wares."

The old man's hand trembled as he poured a blue liquid from one test-tube to another.

"I am constrained to believe that in this Valley of the Infernal River we are confronted with the greatest malignant genius mankind has ever produced."

"Why should he want to demonetize gold?" interrupted Pethwick.

"It will force mankind to adopt a new standard of value and to use an artificial medium of exchange—'labor-hour checks,' perhaps, whose very installation will do more to socialize the world than any other single innovation."

The two friends stood watching him anxiously. "You can't find what they do it with?"

"Not a trace so far. It seems to defy analysis."

"Notice," observed Pethwick, "your electroscope is discharged."

M. Demetrioivich glanced at the gold-leaf electroscope and saw that its tissue leaves were wilted.

Suddenly Standifer interrupted:

"Pethwick, is my hair white? Did that stuff turn my hair white?" He seized the mirror. "Look! Look!" he cried out of nervous shock and a profoundly wounded vanity.

The engineer turned with genuine sympathy for the author, but in turning

he saw a man standing in the entrance watching the excitement with a slight smile.

The engineer paused abruptly, staring.

The stranger was a medium-sized Indian with an abnormally developed head and a thickly painted face. He wore the usual shirt and trousers of a *cholo* and for some reason gave Pethwick a strong impression of Cesare Ruano. Why he resembled Cesare, Pethwick could not state, even after he had inspected him closely. To judge from the Indian's faintly ironic expression, he must have been observing the scientists for several minutes.

M. Demetrioivich first regained his self-possession.

"Are you the man who gave my boy this gold?" he asked sharply, indicating the metal with which he was experimenting.

The painted man looked at the heap.

"I gave a boy some gold for some books," he admitted.

"Well, that's the gold all right," snapped Pethwick.

"Did you know the gold you gave him was poisoned?" proceeded the savant severely.

"Poisoned? How was it poisoned?"

"That is for you to tell us."

"I don't know in the least. What effect did it have?"

The man's tones were completely casual, without fear, regret or chagrin at the charge.

"It burned a place on his leg, and last night he slept with it under his head. You see what it did for yourself."

The stranger looked at Standifer in astonishment and presently ejaculated—

"Is that the same boy?"

"You see you nearly killed him," stated the scientist grimly.

"It was quite accidental; I don't quite understand it myself. Let me look at his trouble."

He walked over with more curiosity than regret in his manner.

Pethwick watched the fellow with a sharp and extraordinary dislike. It was so sharp that it drove out of his mind the amazing fact of finding this sort of person in such a desolate valley.

Standifer exhibited the burn. The stranger looked at it, touched the spot

here and there and finally said, more with the air of an instructor lecturing his inferiors than with that of an Indian talking to white men:

"This is the effect of a metal which I carried with the gold. A metal—I don't know what you call it in your language—possibly you may never have heard of it. Here is some."

He reached in his pocket and drew out a piece of silvery metal as large as a double eagle and dropped it on the table before M. Demetrioivich.

The old savant glanced at the metal, then looked more carefully.

"It's radium," he said in a puzzled voice. "It's the largest piece of radium I ever saw—it's the only piece of pure metallic radium I ever saw. It—it's worth quite a fortune—and owned by an Indian!"

Here M. Demetrioivich breached his invariably good manners by staring blankly at his guest.

"So you are acquainted with it?" observed the stranger with interest.

"Not in its metallic form. I have extracted its bromides myself. And I've seen radium burns before. I might have known it was a radium burn, but I never dreamed of that metal."

"But that was gold that burned me," complained Standifer.

"That's true," agreed M. Demetrioivich, "but, you see, the radiations of radium have the power of settling on any object and producing all the effects of radium itself. This gentleman carried those lumps of gold in his pockets along with about two million dollars' worth of radium." The old savant laughed briefly at the eeriness of the situation. "The gold became charged with radium, burned your leg and whitened your hair. It also affected my electrostat."

THE three men turned to the stranger, who apparently carried fortunes of various metals jingling loose in his pocket.

"Sir," began the savant, "we must apologize to you for our unjust suspicions."

"Do you mean your suspicions were incorrect?" queried the red man.

"I mean," said the old savant with dignity, for this was no way to take an apol-

ogy, "that we were morally culpable in attributing to you criminal motives without waiting for conclusive evidence."

The stranger smiled at this long sentence.

"I can understand your idea without your speaking each word of it. But the idea itself is very strange." He stroked his chin and some paint rubbed off on his fingers, showing a lighter yellowish skin beneath. Then he laughed. "If you should apologize for every incorrect idea you maintain, gentlemen, I should think your lives would be one long apology."

The superciliousness, the careless disdain in this observation, accented Pethwick's antipathy to the man.

At that moment the fellow asked—

"Do all your species live in cloth shelters such as these?"

Standifer, who seemed more kindly disposed toward the stranger than the others, explained that tents were temporary and that houses were permanent.

The newcomer continued his smiling scrutiny of everything and at last asked—

"Can't you gentlemen even communicate with each other without using words and sentences?"

He paused, then, as if to simplify what he had said, went on:

"Suppose you, Mr.—Pethwick, desired to communicate with Mr. —" he made a gesture toward the scientist and added—"Mr.—Demetrioivich, would you be forced to articulate every word in the sentence?"

"How did you come to know my name?" asked the engineer, surprised. "Have we met before?"

The stranger laughed heartily. "I am sure we have not. I see you desire my name. Well, I have a number. In my country the citizens are numbered. I am sure when your own countries become densely populated, you too will adopt a numerical nomenclature."

"What is your number?" asked Standifer, quite astounded at this, as indeed were his companions.

"1753-12,657,109-654-3."

The secretary laughed.

"It sounds like a cross between a combination lock and a football game. Where do you come from, Mr.—Mr. Three?"

The painted man nodded down the valley casually.

"The name of my country is One, or First," he smiled. "Of course that is a very ancient and unscientific name, but notation must begin somewhere, and it usually begins at home. Now I dare say each one of you live in a country called One—no, I see I am wrong." Then he repeated in a lower tone, "America—Rumania—Peru—very pretty names but unscientific."

By this time Mr. Three's remarkable feat of calling the men's names and then calling the countries of their birth drove it in on the explorers that they had encountered an amazing man indeed.

"Do you read our thoughts before we speak?" cried Standifer.

Mr. Three nodded easily.

"Certainly; without that all study of the lower animals would be a mere cataloging of actions and habits."

Pethwick wondered if the fellow meant a very delicate insult to begin talking about the study of "lower animals" so promptly when the conversation naturally turned on himself and his companions. He said nothing, but Mr. Three smiled.

But M. Demetrich was utterly charmed with the vistas of investigation the man's suggestion opened to him.

"Why, that would be wonderful, would it not!" he cried.

"Certainly, without mind-reading comparative psychology is impossible."

"We have professional mind-readers," cried M. Demetrich with enthusiasm. "I wonder why the psychologists have never thought to have one try to read the minds—say of the higher simians!"

Mr. Three seemed to find all of this conversation funny, for he laughed again. But his words were quite serious.

"Besides, this 'mentage,' as we call mind-reading, enables one to converse with every other creature, just as I am talking to you. I take your language forms right out of your own minds and use them. If the creature has no language at all, you still receive its impressions."

BY this time even Pethwick, who disliked the fellow almost to the point of hatred, realized that the stranger was

wonderful indeed. The engineer decided Mr. Three came from some unknown country, which, he reluctantly admitted to himself, seemed to be more highly cultured than England or America. So, by accepting these facts, Pethwick, in a way, prepared himself not to be surprized at anything.

"Do all your countrymen understand 'mentage' or mind-language?" inquired the engineer.

"It is our national mode of communication. I observe you move your hands when you talk—gestures, you call it. In One, we speak a word now and then to accent our thoughts—verbal gestures. Some of our population, who are nervous, sometimes speak several words, or even complete sentences. Often it is an affectation, unless, of course," he added politely as if to exempt his companions, "their minds are not strong enough to converse without words."

"On the other hand, a few well-placed words make speeches, and especially orations, very impressive. Still, some of our greatest orators never utter a sound. But I consider this too much repression, in fact rather an academic thing to do. What you would call a—a—a highbrow. Thank you, Mr. Standifer, for thinking me the term."

"It would be a great saving of time," mused Pethwick.

"Yes, indeed; in One, a person can present a whole thought, or a whole series of thoughts, in a single flash of the brain, if the thinker's brain is sufficiently strong. It is almost instantaneous."

Standifer smiled blissfully.

"Think of instantaneous sermons! Let's get to that place!"

Pethwick and the professor did not share in Standifer's badinage but sat amazed at this being whose name was a number. The engineer realized the futility of all the questions he could ask. Turn the idea about. Suppose Mr. Three should ask Pethwick to explain American civilization in a casual talk. It would be impossible. So, it was impossible for Mr. Three to give Pethwick much idea of the land of One.

M. Demetrich took up the questioning.

"Have you been using radium for a long time in One, Mr. Three?"

"For centuries. We are in the midst of the Radium Age. It was developed out of the Uranium Age, and that out of the Aluminum Age. All this arose out of a prehistoric Steel Age, a very heavy clumsy metal, I have heard archeologists say."

"You don't mean your mechanical appliances are made of radium?"

"No, radium is our source of power. It has changed our mechanics from molecular mechanics to atomic mechanics. The first men of One could utilize only molecular energy, such as steam and gasoline. With the aid of radium, we soon developed the enormous force that lies concentrated in the atom. This gives my countrymen unlimited power. It can be derived for any sort of matter, because all matter is composed of atoms and our force is generated through the destruction of atoms."

All this time Mr. Three's voice was growing weaker and weaker until finally he said—

"You will have to excuse me from further conversation, gentlemen; my throat is not accustomed to much talking."

He tapped it with an apologetic smile. As he did so, he glanced about and his eyes lit on the chess-board and men which Pethwick and M. Demetrioivich had been using on the previous evening.

"What is that?"

"A game."

"Who plays it? Ah, M. Demetrioivich and Mr. Pethwick. I would not object to a party if you feel disposed."

"Professor and I will try a consultation game against you," suggested Pethwick, moving a stool over to the table.

"I don't understand the game, but if you will just think how the pieces are moved," requested the mind-reader, "I dare say I will soon learn."

The engineer framed the demonstration in his mind and Mr. Three nodded.

"I see. It seems to be a sort of rudimentary stage of a game we call 'cube' in First. However, 'cube' is an entirely mental game, although younger children are given material boards and pieces to assist them in focusing their attention.

"'Cube' has eight boards such as this, superimposed upon one another. Each board has thirty-two pieces on it, thus

giving two hundred and fifty-six pieces in all, each player controlling one hundred and twenty-eight. All the major pieces can move up or down, forward or backward, but the pawns can only advance, or go higher. As no real boards are used, the whole play must be kept in mind. Since each player knows what combinations are in the other man's mind, the game becomes a contest of intricacy, that is, until one player grows confused, makes an incoherent move and is checkmated. It is a very pleasant amusement for persons who have nothing more serious to think about."

"I have seen mental chess-players in America," observed Standifer, "but they use only one board. I suppose eight would complicate it. I don't play myself."

The chess-players made no answer to this remark, but set up the men. Mr. Three defeated the scientists' combined skill in a game of ten moves.

AS this extraordinary party was brought to a conclusion, Pablo Pasca entered the tent with breakfast on a tray. When the thief saw the guest, he almost dropped the food, but after a moment came on in and placed the dishes on the table. As he did so, he looked meaningly at Pethwick, nodded faintly and retired.

The engineer excused himself and followed the Indian. He found Pablo in the kitchen tent, shaken out of his ordinary stoicism.

"Do you know who he is, *señor*?" he asked in a low voice.

"His name is Three," said Pethwick, involuntarily guarding his own tone.

"No, I mean, do you know that he is the man who murdered Cesare Ruano?" asked the thief earnestly.

The engineer nodded.

"I'd thought of that. How do you know?"

"How! *Mio Dios*—everything the man has on is Cesare's. Cesare's clothes! Cesare's shoes! On his finger is Cesare's ring—the ring Cesare was saving to be garroted in!"

"I thought somehow he resembled Cesare," nodded Pethwick, "and I knew it was not his face."

"*Ciertamente*, not Cesare, but his mur-

derer," aspirated Pablo excitedly. "I saw this fellow behind this very boulder! This same fellow!"

Pethwick nodded in the sunlight, unaware that Pablo expected him to do anything. Indeed, the engineer was glad he had come out of the tent. Mr. Three's intelligence was oppressive. So now he stood breathing deeply, as if from some struggle. The cliffs, the sunshine, the river, the savor of the kitchen, almost made him doubt the existence in his tent of such a personage as Mr. Three from the land of One. Where in Heaven's name was that land? Did there flourish over behind the Andes somewhere an unknown race of extraordinary arts and sciences who called themselves the First?

And there recurred to him his fancy that if such a nation existed, it must be an offshoot of the old Incan race. Perhaps fugitives flying before the old *conquistadores* found a haven in some spot and there had built up the most advanced civilization upon the face of the earth. The thought was utterly fantastic, and yet it was the only explanation of Mr. Three sitting there in the tent.

"Well?" said Pablo interrogatively.

The engineer came out of his reverie.

"Is that all you wanted to tell me?"

"All. Isn't that enough?"

"Oh, yes."

"Aren't you going to do anything?" demanded Pablo. "He is an Indian. I thought when Indians killed any one the white men garroted them. *Qwak!* Like that!" He pinched his throat and made a disagreeable sound.

"What am I to do?" inquired Pethwick blankly.

"Blessed Virgin! Does not the white man's law work in the Valle de Rio Infernillo? I knock an old man on the head and barely save my neck. This *cholo* kills my good *camarado*, wears his clothes, steals the very ring Cesare meant to be garroted in, and what happens to him? Why, he sits at the table with white men and plays! *Ehue!* A fine justice!"

The engineer hardly knew how to answer this. He stood looking at Pablo rather blankly. He felt sure an attempt to arrest Mr. Three would prove perilous indeed. On the other hand, Pablo's attitude demanded that Pethwick should act.

Isolated like this, Pethwick was the lone representative of the great Anglo-Saxon convention of justice. It is a strange convention that polices every clime and every tongue. Red, brown, black and yellow men refrain from violence because the white man says—

"Thou shalt not kill!"

Wherever a single unit of the white race is placed, that law inheres in him. Men of all colors come to him and say—

"Murder has been done; now what will you do?"

And he must act.

He must deal out that strange Anglo-Saxon convention called justice, or he must die in the attempt.

That is what the white race means; it is what civilization means. It is not any one white man who has this power of judging and punishing; it is any white man. They are the knight-errants of the earth. Each one must fight, sit in judgment and administer justice to the best of his ability and conscience, so help him God.

It is the most amazing hegemony on the face of the earth, when one comes to think of it—and the most universally accepted.

Now Pablo was asking Pethwick an account of his stewardship.

Certainly the engineer did not think of the problem in just those terms. He was not conscious of his racial instinct. He thought, in rather loose American fashion, that since Pablo had put it up to him like this he would have to do something.

The Zambo began again.

"Look at what I did. I only knocked an old man on the head——"

Pethwick interrupted him with a gesture.

"Pablo, get those handcuffs you and Cesare used to wear and bring 'em to the tent."

"*Si, señor,*" hissed the half-breed gratefully.

Pethwick turned back toward the tent with thorough distaste for his commission. As he entered, Mr. Three glanced up with quizzical eyes and it suddenly flashed on the engineer with a sense of embarrassment that the man from One already knew what was in his thoughts.

THIS was soon proved. Mr. Three nodded his large head smilingly.

"Yes," he said, "Pablo is quite right. Here is the ring."

He held up a hand and displayed an old silver ring engraved in the form of a snake.

M. Demetrioivich glanced up at this extraordinary monolog.

"Then you did kill Cesare Ruano?" exclaimed the engineer.

Mr. Three paused a moment, then answered:

"Yes, I did. There is no use going through a long catechism. I may also add, I knew the efflorescence of radium would have some effect on the boy Standifer, but I did not know what."

The old savant stared at the man from One.

"Be careful what you say, Mr. Three. Your confession will place you in jeopardy of the law."

"Then you maintain laws in this country," observed Mr. Three. "What will be the nature of the instruction you will give me?"

"No instruction at all," said Pethwick; "punishment."

"A very antiquated custom. I should think any one could see that criminals need instruction."

At that moment Pablo Pasca appeared in the entrance with the manacles.

"This is hardly the time to enter into an abstract discussion of punishment, Mr. Three," observed Pethwick brusquely. He held the manacles a moment a little self-consciously, then said, "You may consider yourself under arrest."

To Pethwick's surprise, the man from One offered no resistance but peaceably allowed himself to be chained to the chair in which he sat. He watched the procedure with a faintly amused expression and even leaned over to observe how the anklets were adjusted to his legs.

A certain air of politeness about the Incan at last constrained Pethwick to say—

"You understand, Mr. Three, we are forced to do this—it is the law."

"And you rather dislike me anyway, do you not, Mr. Pethwick?" added Mr. Three genially.

The engineer flushed but kept his eyes steadily on Mr. Three's.

"I dislike you, but I dislike to do this more."

After the shackling the captors stood undecidedly. So they had captured the murderer of Cesare Ruano.

"We'll have to carry him before a magistrate," pondered M. Demetrioivich. "It is very annoying."

"M. Demetrioivich," said Mr. Three, still smiling in his chains, "you have studied physiology?"

"Yes."

"And perhaps vivisection?"

"Certainly."

"Then why all this disturbance about killing a lower animal for scientific ends?"

The old Rumanian looked at Mr. Three steadfastly. "I can not accept your point, Mr. Threë. We are all human beings together, even if Cesare Ruano did not have the culture——"

The rather pointless proceedings were interrupted by a burst of snorting and braying from the corral. Pethwick hurried outside, for the pack-animals were really of more importance than the prisoner. The engineer got out just in time to see Pablo go at full speed toward the enclosure. The Indian had a repeating rifle and no doubt feared the attack of a puma or a jaguar.

On Pethwick's heels came both M. Demetrioivich and the white-haired secretary. The valley was strewn with boulders big and little and the men had difficulty in running over broken ground. From afar off Pethwick saw that the down-river side of the corral had been knocked down, and all the llamas and mules came storming out, flying down toward the camp as if the fiends pursued them.

Pablo fired his rifle in the air in an effort to turn them. As he did so, the Zambo reeled as if he had received a mighty but invisible blow. Mules and llamas plunged straight past their staggering master and for a moment Pethwick was afraid they would run him down.

Next moment the engineer heard the secretary and the professor shouting at the top of their voices. He looked around and saw the comb of his tent on fire.

Thought of his prisoner, likely to burn up, sent Pethwick sprinting breathless back toward the tent. As the flames rushed over the oiled canvas Pethwick jerked up the ground-pins of the rear wall and shoved under.

Mr. Three still sat in the chair with arms and legs bound to the posts. He slumped queerly. His hat dropped down on his shirt. Half suffocated, the engineer grabbed up chair, manacles, man and all and rushed into the open.

Once outside, he dropped his burden and began to slap at the fire on his own clothes. The other men began to put out the fire on Mr. Three's garments. At their strokes the garments collapsed.

Inside Cesare Ruano's clothes was an empty human skin cut off at the neck. M. Demetrioivich drew it out of the burning rags. It had a cicatrice across its breast from nipple to nipple. It had bullet wounds in legs and buttocks. It tallied exactly with the police description of the marks on the skin of Cesare Ruano.

With colorless faces the men stood studying this ghastly relic of the murderer in the brilliant sunshine.

The pack-animals were just disappearing down the river valley. A few remaining shreds of cloth burned where their tent once stood. About them the sinister landscape lay empty.

V

PROF. DEMETRIOVICH held up the gruesome relic.

"Gentlemen," he stated in his matter-of-fact voice, "somebody—something has been stalking us masked in this."

"But why masked?" Standifer's voice was tangled with horror.

"He was stalking us in a human skin, exactly as a hunter stalks a deer in a deer robe," returned M. Demetrioivich.

"Then wasn't he a human being?" gasped the secretary.

"It was certainly the devil!" chattered Pablo Pasca with a putty face. "The prefect told us not to come here."

"He knows he is a human being," accented Pethwick irritably, "but he doubts if we are. Did you notice his manner? Did you observe the supercilious, egotistical, conceited air of everything he did

or said? He put us down as Darwin's connecting link. We are animals to him. He puts on one of our skins to hunt us down in. Otherwise, he was afraid we would go scampering off from him like rabbits."

"Then he is a fool if he thought white men are animals," declared Pablo angrily.

"Well, he's not exactly a fool either," admitted Pethwick grudgingly, "but every single thing he said was a knock at us. I never heard——" The engineer's angry voice trailed off into an angry silence.

The party stood puzzling over the extraordinary tactics of the man from One. As they buffeted the problem about in their brains, a rabbit dashed almost under their feet bound down the valley. They paid no attention to it.

"I'll give you my guess," offered Pethwick. "I still believe we have encountered one of the ancient Incans. In Prescott's account of them, you notice the highest arts of civilization mingled with the grossest barbarities. A custom of wearing an enemy's skin may have grown up among them, just as our North American Indians used to take scalps. No doubt this fellow was spying on our number. I expect him to return soon with a band and attempt our capture."

"What a curious fate for the DeLong Geographical Expedition," mused the white-haired young secretary.

"Still," objected M. Demetrioivich, "it might be a Bolshevik method of spreading terror through the world."

"So, professor, you don't believe after all he put on Cesare's skin to stalk us?" queried Standifer.

"James, I don't know what to think," admitted the savant.

"The whole thing fits in better with my Incan theory," pressed the engineer. "The half-civilized Indians around here, like Pablo and Cesare, could very easily be afraid of some highly developed branch of the Incans, especially if those Incans were seeking victims to sacrifice to the sun. Under such circumstances, it might be necessary to slip on the hide of a half-breed in order to get near the others."

"It would also explain why that man

ambushed our party when we entered the valley," added the secretary.

"Thanks, Standifer, for helping me out," said Pethwick. "It would also show why the peons around here call this the Rio Infiernillo and give it such a wide berth."

M. Demetrioovich pulled his chin.

"Your theory seems to hang together right now," he admitted. "If you are on the right track, we will have a marvel to report—if we ever get back."

"Then, too," went on Pethwick, encouraged, "since the prefect warned us against the valley, it suggests to me there has been something sinister here for years—long before Bolshevism became a power."

"These are queer theories," laughed Standifer, "one going to the extremely ancient and the other to the extremely modern."

During the latter part of this discussion, an atok, a sort of huge native rodent, slithered down the valley past the scientists, dodging from one boulder to another. Now a Peruvian fox whisked past.

These unusual animals passing within a few minutes proved sufficient to draw Pethwick's attention from the subject under discussion. The engineer looked up the stony stretch and a surprising sight filled his eyes.

The whole valley worked with glimpses of flying animals. Rats, hares, civets, what not, darted here and there from covert to covert. Along the edge of the river slunk a panther, making cat-like rushes between hiding-places. The shrill whistle of three frightened deer sounded down the valley.

It seemed as if a wave of fear were depopulating the whole Rio Infiernillo. All the engineer could see was innumerable furtive dodgings. From the dull surface of the river arose a loon, screaming, and it boomed down stream with fear-struck speed. Only one animal fled in the open, a huge black bear with a white muzzle, the ucumari. He was king in the Andes, as the grizzly reigns in the Rockies. He lunged down the middle of the cañon, taking the whole Infernal Valley for his course. He was afraid of nothing in the Sierras—except what was behind him.

The scientists hurried out from in front of the brute and let him lunge by unchallenged. They stared up the burnt valley marveling at this exodus of animals.

Presently, far away against the blackish stones, Pethwick descried what seemed to be yellow fleas hopping among the boulders.

"That must be what made our pack-animals break loose!" cried the engineer.

"Wonder what they are?" from the author.

"I say it's the devil making a drive," answered Pablo, crossing himself with fervor.

The animals kept darting past. The distant fleas grew into bugs, then into some sort of animals and at last were defined against the charnel gulch as human beings.

"Jumping Jehosaphat!" cried Standifer. "They are those Incans you were talking about, Pethwick. Scores of 'em! They've come for us!"

The secretary stepped around behind a large boulder that hid everything except his head.

Other of the expedition followed suit, hardly knowing what to believe.

The approaching party were yellow men. Each one carried something in his hand that flashed like metal. They leaped from boulder to boulder in their chase with an amazing activity. The very vicunas themselves that skittered along the craggy sides of the valley did not exhibit a greater agility.

Pablo Pasca, notwithstanding his belief that all this was a great drive of the devil, nevertheless became excited at the passing game. As one speckled deer came shimmering down through the diamond-like sunshine, Pablo determined to beat Satan out of one carcass, so he leveled his rifle for a shot. The author saw it and put his fingers to his ears to dull the report.

At that moment a voice quite close to the party broke the silence with:

"Don't shoot. There must be no holes in the skins."

The word "skins" brought the party around with a start. They were nervous on the topic. The secretary, however, still stood with his fingers in his ears, watching the deer.

On top of a large boulder, still wearing his look of condescension and amusement, sat the recent prisoner of the expedition, Mr. Three. Since he had flung off Cesare's clothes and skin, the weird creature was without apparel and sat naked in the cold vivid sunshine, his body of a clear yellowish complexion and his large head still painted a coppery red.

IT was the most grotesque combination Pethwick could have imagined, but Mr. Three maintained a perfect composure, dignity—and condescension. His painted face had the faintly amused expression of a man watching the antics of, say, some pet goats.

The fellow's body suggested to Pethwick a ripe pear or yellow peach. His hands and feet were disagreeably small—sure sign of ancient and aristocratic blood. He must have slipped right through the manacles the moment his captors turned their backs. In one hand he held a small metallic rod.

Pethwick stared at the remarkable transformation and finally blurted out—

"Did you break loose from the handcuffs and set fire to our tent?"

"The fire was quite accidental," assured the man from One. "I did it with this focusing-rod when I got rid of your quaint old manacles."

"Focusing-rod," caught up Standifer, for, notwithstanding all he had suffered at the hands of Mr. Three, the pride of a flattered author and the remarkable sale of his books left him with a kindly feeling in his heart for the fellow.

"Yes, focusing-rod."

"What does it focus?"

"Wireless power."

"We have transmission of wireless power in America," observed the Professor, "but that is certainly the most compact terminal I ever saw."

Mr. Three glanced at the rod in his hand.

"Oh, yes, this is one of the primitive instruments. I fancy this came into use among thinking creatures along with fire, the keystone of the arch and the old-fashioned seventy-two-mile gun. They were important additions to human knowledge, but their discoverers and the dates of their discovery are lost in prehistoric eras."

For a moment Mr. Three sat pensively in the sunshine, his mind dwelling on that misty time in the land of One when some unrecorded genius found out how to focus wireless power with a little metal rod. No doubt to this mysterious man the principle of the rod appeared so simple that any rational creature would know it.

Presently he came out of his reverie and waved his focusing-bar down the valley.

"You men," he directed, "will follow the rest of the quarry down the river—everything must go!"

For a moment the scientists stared at him, not understanding.

"What is it?" inquired Standifer.

"Follow the quarry down the valley and be quick about it," snapped the yellow man brusquely.

An indignant flush swept over Pethwick.

"You must have gone crazy, Three. We'll do as we please."

"Why should we go?" inquired M. Demetrioivich with his academic suavity.

Mr. Three tapped impatiently with his rod on the boulder.

"So our commander can select specimens to carry to One," he explained briefly.

"Oh, I see," cried Pethwick, somewhat mollified. "He wants us to help him select the animals, as we are naturalists."

For once in their intercourse Mr. Three showed genuine surprise. He sprang to his feet and stared at them.

"You help him select! You!" The gnome broke into the most insulting of laughter. "You bunch of idiots, he is going to select one of you as a specimen to carry to One!" Here he threw off his brief tolerance of opposition and shouted, "Forward, march! I don't want to have to use force!"

For a moment the men stood almost paralyzed with amazement. Mr. Three evidently read their mental state, for he put a hand over his mouth to conceal his grin and to maintain his air of grim authority.

Pethwick first organized active resistance. Pablo Pasca still stood with his rifle at ready. Pethwick whispered sharply to the Indian—

"Get him!"

Almost by reflex action, the Zambo swung his rifle on Mr. Three and fired.

At the same moment Pablo staggered backward as if he had received a powerful blow out of the air. His rifle clattered to the stones. At the same instant Pethwick felt a sensation like a strong electric shock. Standifer grunted and clapped a hand to his already wounded leg.

At this act of war the party of scientists threw themselves flat behind boulders. Pethwick adjusted his rifle with hands shaking from his shock and then peered around his shelter for a glimpse of Mr. Three. He saw the yellow man still standing on the boulder. The engineer eased his rifle around unsteadily. The bead of the gun wavered about the big painted head. With a determined effort the engineer settled it on his target. He was just squeezing the trigger when tingling knots rushed through his arms, legs and body, stiffening them, flashing fire in his brain, beating him with a thousand prickly hammers. It was an electric shock. He flattened under it, squirming and twisting.

The moment his thought of opposition vanished in pain the shock ceased.

All three white men and the Indian lay motionless. The only sound Pethwick could hear was an occasional groan from Standifer and the faint patter of passing animals.

A ray of sardonic amusement fluttered through the engineer's dizzy brain—the De Long Geographical Expedition captured as a curious species of lower animals.

Sudden hearty laughter from the nearby boulder told the engineer that Mr. Three had caught the jest and was enjoying it. Pethwick flushed angrily.

AFTER this convincing contest with the focusing-rod the expedition abandoned resistance and surrendered themselves as prisoners of war, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say prisoners of science.

Although Pablo had shot at Mr. Three, that strange being regarded it no more than if a cat had scratched at him. Instead of being angry, he really tried to comfort the men. He told them only one of their number would be taken as a

specimen to the land of One; the person chosen would be retained alive and, if he proved tractable, he would undoubtedly be allowed to run at large within certain limits and might be taught simple tricks wherewith to amuse the visitors at the zoo; such as playing a simple game of chess on one board.

This may or may not have been a sarcastic fling at the feeble game of chess which Pethwick and M. Demetrioovich had just played; at any rate the thought of playing endless games of chess through the bars of a zoological cage filled the engineer with nausea. No doubt on one side of him would be a monkey begging for peanuts and on the other a surly orang. For Pethwick did not doubt the specimen selected would be classed among the simians.

As they walked along the engineer thought up a new line of defense. He began to threaten Mr. Three with the American Army and Navy. He told the yellow man this expedition was American and their capture would be no small affair. They were a famous scientific body. They would be missed. Their abduction would mean a war between the land of One and the whole League of Nations.

At this Mr. Three interrupted incredulously—

"Do you creatures really compose a scientific body?"

Pethwick was so cut by the remark that he stopped talking and walked along in silence.

The professor plied his captor with many questions. He discovered that the men from One had a portable furnace and were extracting radium from the outcrop of pitchblende in the valley. The mysterious burned places which Pethwick had noted in his journal were spots where the furnace had been operated. The strange lights which the expedition had seen on several occasions were the men moving the furnace from one place to another. Mr. Three explained that they always moved the furnace at night; it was difficult to do this during the day because the sun's rays created an etheric storm.

The yellow man's conversation entertained the white men notwithstanding their uncertain fate. Pablo Pasca, how-

ever, trembled on the verge of collapse. He knew he was in the hands of theimps of satan. Now and then Pethwick heard him groan.

"Oh, Mother of Heaven! Oh, if I could get back to the garrote! Poor Cesare Ruano, in torment without his skin—or the ring he meant to be garroted in!"

Animals still rushed past the party and behind them came the yellow beaters, scaring up the game.

It was useless for anything to hide from these terrible men with their focusing-rods. Evidently they could sense an animal's fright and locate it as an ordinary man can locate a sound. As soon as they found something in a covert, a slight electric shock sent it headlong after the other animals.

For the first time in his life Pethwick felt some kinship for the lower animals. He too was in the *battue*, one with the foxes and rabbits that fluttered past him. For ages man had slaughtered the lower animals exactly as the men from One were doing now.

And just as man had annihilated the bison, the penguin, the dodo, so no doubt this new and more powerful race from One would exterminate man and his cities, his works of art and his sciences. The vision of a charnel world painted itself on his depressed imagination—a wiping out of existing races and a re-peopleing by these yellow Incans. Compared to such a conflict the late world war would be trivial.

AMID this day-dream of Armageddon, the engineer heard M. Demetrioivich ejaculate to himself—

"So it is a German Bolshevik undertaking after all. There's a Zeppelin!"

Pethwick looked up suddenly. The prisoners had rounded a turn in the valley. Not more than three hundred yards distant rose an enormous structure in the shape of a Zeppelin. It required a second glance to observe this fact, as the huge creation stood on its end instead of lying horizontal as do the ordinary flying-ships.

Instead of being made of cloth, this Zeppelin had a skin of white metal, no doubt aluminum. Indeed, for the first time a dirigible had been constructed that had the stanchness and air-worthiness

that deserved the name ship. This was no mere bubble of varnished cloth.

It was enormous. It arose between seven hundred and seven hundred and fifty feet high, an amazing skyscraper of silver whose fulgor was enhanced by the dark and melancholy background of the Infernal Valley.

The immense vessel rested on its stern, which tapered down to perhaps forty feet in diameter. It was shored up with long metal rods anchored in the earth. The rods, some hundred feet long, were inserted in the airship just where its great barrel began to taper to its stern.

Five hundred feet up the side of the cylinder Pethwick noticed the controlling planes, which looked exceedingly small for the vast bulk they were designed to pilot. When the engineer pointed these out to the professor, M. Demetrioivich seemed surprised.

"Do you realize, Pethwick, what their small size indicates? The speed of this ship through the air must be prodigious if these tiny controls grip the air with sufficient leverage to direct this monster."

Then the old scientist went on to commend the novel idea of landing the dirigible on her stern. It did away with wide manœuvring to gain altitude. This aluminum dirigible could drop into a hole slightly larger than her own diameter and launch herself out of it straight at the sky. It was an admirable stroke.

Workmen dotted the vessel's sides, scrubbing the bright skin as assiduously as a crew painting a man-of-war. Pethwick could distinguish this scrubbing force up for two or three hundred feet. Beyond that he caught only glimmers of moving dots amid the reflections of the sun.

The organization of the crew seemed cast along military lines. Small squads of men or soldiers marched in exact ranks and files over the valley to gather up the animals stunned by the focusing-rods.

At first Pethwick had not observed these animals, but a more careful look showed him a number of specimens that had been struck down as they passed the ship. The big-headed yellow men were collecting these in cages, evidently for exhibition purposes when they returned to the extraordinary land from which they came. The slaughter had not been

wasteful. Only one member of each species of animal had been taken.

The yellow men worked at top speed and were plainly under the continual barked orders of soldiery, but oddly enough not a sound was heard. The whole control was mental. The silence gave Pethwick the strange impression that he was looking at a gigantic cinema.

A MOVEMENT behind the white men caused them to look around. A file of yellow soldiers was moving toward the dirigible, coming from the direction of their burned camp up the valley. These men bore the mounted skeletons which the DeLong Geographical Expedition had observed when they first entered the strange valley of the Rio Infernillo.

The removal of these objects suggested to Pethwick that the men from One and their superdirigible would soon sail from the valley. A great curiosity to see the departure seized the engineer. He looked for the big driving propellers which he thought must draw the ship, but he could see none.

At that moment four soldiers with a large metal cage approached the DeLong Geographical party. At the same time, on one of the upper rounds of the airship, some seventy-five feet above the base, appeared a yellow man with a peculiar scintillating star fixed to his big yellow head. This personage looked directly toward the explorers but said nothing.

When he looked Mr. Three drew himself up and saluted in military fashion.

Then, evidently for the benefit of his captors, Mr. Three answered aloud the mental questions which his superior must have put to him. Here are the words of the one-sided conversation:

"Yes, sir."

"No, sir."

"Ordinary ruby-blooded mammals, sir, with intelligence somewhat higher than monkeys, sir."

"They communicate their simple thoughts exactly as monkeys do, sir—by chattering."

"They are absolutely insensible to all mental vibrations, sir, more completely so than the four-legged animals."

"I would suggest you take all five.

They will prove very amusing, sir, in the national zoo. Their attempts to deceive each other and to deceive even me, sir, are as good as a farce. I believe you will find them much more humorous than chimpanzees or the ordinary monkeys, sir."

"Sorry you can't. In that case I suggest we take the brown one. His color is the nearest human. Then, too, he has the best physique. None of them have any minds to speak of."

"Very well, sir."

Here Mr. Three saluted stiffly and directed the four workmen with the cage toward Pablo Pasca.

As the laborers lowered their cage and started for the half-breed Pablo's eyes almost started from his head. He whirled to run but seemed to realize the hopelessness of trying to escape from the amazing agility of the men from One. Next moment he whipped out a knife and dashed into the midst of his assailants, slashing and stabbing like one possessed.

But the soldiers of One had feline agility. They dodged, whipped under his blows like game-cocks. One leaped straight over the heads of his comrades and landed headlong on the Zambo. It was an unfortunate leap. Pablo's blade caught him in the shoulder and a dark liquid spurted out.

In the instant of withdrawing the blade, the yellow men seized the half-breed's arms and legs. They went down with the Zambo in a struggling pile. Pablo kicked, bit, twisted his knife with a wrist movement, trying to cut something. But the yellow men worked swiftly and methodically.

"Quick!" commanded Mr. Three. "We must start in four minutes!" Then, in answer to some question the yellow soldiers thought to him, "I can't use my focusing-rod. It might destroy what little mind he has."

A moment later the little yellow men got to their feet with the ex-thief hanging between them by his legs and arms. The poor fellow turned an agonized face to Pethwick.

"*Señor! Señor!*" he screamed. "Save me! Save poor Pablo! Oh, Holy Mary! Sacred Mother! Señor, Señor Pethwick!"

His voice rose to a screech. Blood trickled from his nostrils. His face was white with fear.

Pethwick stared with wide eyes at the struggle. The injustice of this capture for scientific purposes thundered at the American's heart. Pethwick was a white man, of that race which deals justice among weaker men and carries out its judgments with its life.

At Pablo's shriek of despair something seemed to snap in Pethwick's head. He hesitated a second, then lunged into the victorious yellow men.

He never reached them. A wave of flame seemed to lap around him. Then came blackness.

WHEN Pethwick revived, there were no more yellow men in sight. The great shining dirigible stood entirely closed and apparently lifeless. The sun was setting and its rays filled the great charnel valley with a bloody light. The dirigible looked like an enormous red waterstand. In a few minutes the lower half of the great ship was purple in shadow while the upper half turned a deeper red. The silence was absolute. The three white men stood staring at the strange scene.

Quite suddenly from where the stern of the Zeppelin nested on the ground broke out a light of insufferable brilliancy. A luminous gas seemed to boil out in whirls of furious brightness. It spread everywhere, and in its radiance the great ship stood out once more in brilliant silver from stem to stern.

In that fulgor Pethwick saw the restraining rods cast off, and the dirigible from the land of One mounted straight into the green heart of the evening sky.

The moment it struck full sunlight at a height of five hundred yards it seemed caught in some tremendously strong wind, for it moved eastward at a velocity that increased by prodigious bounds. Within half a minute its light was reduced from the terrific glare of a furnace to the glow of a headlight, and then to a radiance like that of a shooting star against the darkening eastern sky.

As the watchers followed it with their eyes a strange thing happened. That white light turned violet, then indigo,

green, yellow, orange and red, and so faded out.

In the Valle de Rio Infernillo lingered a phosphorescent mist that told of the First men's passing. It settled on the cliffs and crags and glowed with spectral luminosity. The men looked at each other; they too were covered with this shining stuff.

"Gentlemen," quavered M. Demetrio-vich, "I believe we have on us the residual emanations of radium. It will likely kill us. Let us go down to the river and wash it off."

The three men set out, stumbling through the darkness, guided somewhat by the faint light given off by their own bodies.

They waded into the black waters of the Infernal River and began scrubbing each other furiously, trying to rid themselves of this dangerous luminosity. High above them it still shimmered from cliff and crag. Presently this faded out and there reigned complete darkness and complete silence.

ON the following morning, when the DeLong Geographical Expedition was about to start back for civilization, they saw on the scene of the conflict between Pablo and the yellow soldiers, where the half-breed had stabbed his captors, a number of dark-green stains.

On analysis this green also proved to be chlorophyll.

A COMMUNICATION FROM GILBERT H. DELONG, PRESIDENT OF THE DELONG GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY, TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE NOBEL PRIZE FOUNDATION, STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN.

Sirs: It is my privilege to bring to your attention the extraordinary journal of the DeLong Geographical Expedition into that unmapped region of Peru, in the department of Ayacucho, known as the Valle de Rio Infernillo.

Enclosed with this journal is M. Demetrio-vich's able presentation of the theory that the dirigible observed in that valley was operated by the Bolshevik government of either Austria or Russia.

Also enclosed is the monograph of Mr. Herbert M. Pethwick, C. E., who pre-

sents a most interesting speculation tending to prove that the strange aircraft was a development made independently of the known civilized world by an offshoot of the ancient Incan race, depatriated by the Spaniards in 1533 A.D.

To my mind, both of these hypotheses, although brilliantly maintained, fail to take into consideration two highly significant facts which are set forth but not greatly stressed in the record of the expedition as kept by Mr. James B. Standifer, Sec.

These two facts are, first, the serial number which served as a name of the man from One, and the other fact, that in both cases where a man from One was wounded he bled what for want of a better term must be called chlorophyllaceous blood.

From few other writers than Mr. Standifer would I accept so bizarre a statement of fact, but his power of exact and minute observation is so well attested by his well-known work, "Reindeer in Iceland," that I dare not question his strict adherence to truth.

The phenomena set forth in the journal happened. That is beyond cavil. The problem for the scientific world is their interpretation.

In handling this problem, I shall not only assume that the journal is accurate, but I shall further assume that the being known in the record as Mr. Three told the precise truth in every statement ascribed to him.

I have every confidence in Mr. Three's probity for several reasons. First, he has no motive for prevarication. Second, a man who habitually communicates with his fellows by telepathy would not be accustomed to falsehood, since falsehood is physically impossible when a man's mind lies before his companions like an open book. Third, to a man habitually accustomed to truth, lying is a difficult and uncongenial labor. In brief, lying is like any other art; it requires practise to do it well.

In regard to the serial number, both of the above mentioned writers apparently fail to see the enormous problem it poses. As for the chlorophyllaceous blood, our authors pass it with a vague surmise that somehow it is used in extracting gold, when the whole object of the expedition,

according to Mr. Three, was not gold but radium.

Because my esteemed colleagues neglect these two critical points, their whole theories, as ably and ingeniously defended as they are, to my mind collapse into mere brilliant sophisms.

In the brief analysis herewith presented I shall touch on a number of points, among which the questions evoked by the serial number and the chlorophyll blood will be noticed in their proper places.

First, then, Mr. Three himself states that the object of the expedition was the extraction of radium from the pitchblende in the Infernal Valley. The use the men from One made of this radium was demonstrated at the departure of the dirigible, for that vessel must have been propelled by the emanations of radium. According to the description of Mr. Standifer, the ship used no screw propellers or tractors, but a powerful emanation of radium from under its stern shot the great metal cylinder upward exactly as powder propels a sky-rocket.

That radium would possess such power is well known. It has been calculated that two pounds of radium would possess sufficient force to swing the earth out of its orbit.

With such power the airship would be capable of enormous speed. A high speed was guessed by M. Demetrioivich when he observed the small controlling-plane. However, the vastness of this speed was demonstrated by Mr. Standifer in the last paragraph of his account, by his curious observation that the light from the airship, as seen against the evening sky, turned violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, red and then was lost. In other words it ran through the whole spectrum from the most rapid to the lowest vibrations per second and then vanished.

What is the meaning of this significant detail?

Allow me to recall an analogy in sound. The tone of a bell on a train departing at high speed becomes lower in pitch. This is because the air vibrations reach the ear at longer intervals.

Apply that to the change of light observed on the airship. Then the vessel must have been withdrawing at such a

speed that it lowered the "pitch" of light vibrations from white to red and finally cancelled its light in blackness.

The only conclusion to be drawn from this is that at the time of the light's extinction, the mysterious metal cylinder was hurtling through space at the speed of light itself; that is to say, at a speed of one hundred and eighty-six thousand miles per second.

OBERVE that I say, "space," not air. Why? In the first place such a speed in air would fuse any metal. But there is another and a better reason.

It requires the average human eye one-twentieth of a second to perceive a color change. If Mr. Standifer had observed these color changes at the highest possible nerve rate, the operation would have required seven-twentieths of a second. Let us assume it required half a second. During that interval the cylinder would have traversed, at the speed of light, ninety-three thousand miles in a straight line. That is more than eleven times the diameter of this globe. Therefore it was far outside of our atmosphere. Also it proves the mysterious vessel was not bound for Austria or Russia. It was leaving the earth.

How was this velocity attained?

I submit by the reaction of radium upon sunlight.

As every schoolboy knows, the drift of a comet's tail is caused by the pressure of light. As soon as this airship arose to the height of about five hundred yards into sunlight, it began to drift eastward with a rapidly increasing velocity. In other words, the metal skin of the ship, which Mr. Pethwick took for aluminum, was probably a much lighter metal—a metal so light that it was capable of being buffeted along in the surf of sunlight. Now if the ship were propelled merely on the barbs of sunbeams, it would have attained the velocity of light. But the velocity of radium emanations is one-fifteenth that of light. So by running down the light current, and allowing the radium to react against the sunbeams, a speed of one and one-fifteenth the velocity of light might be generated; that is one hundred and ninety-eight thousand miles per second.

Such speed would admit of interplanetary travel.

However, it is probable the men from One could accelerate the radiation from radium by electrical or chemical means. They may have learned to boil the metal as men boil water. In such case the pressure of its radiation would be vastly increased, and with it the possible speed of the ship. This gives an unknown and problematical power of transition far beyond the velocity of light. At such rate a journey even to one of the fixed stars would be within the realm of possibility.

We may therefore with prudence hypothesize that the mysterious ether ship observed in the valley of the Rio Infernillo was an interstellar voyager stopping by the earth as a coaling-port to refuel with radium.

However, as it is improbable that the ether ship was going beyond the confines of our solar system, a speculation as to what planet the men from One were bound may be reached by noting the day and the hour the ship sailed from the earth.

As our earth swings around the ecliptic, it would be possible for interplanetary mariners to obtain a favorable current of sunlight in any direction. No doubt the navigator of the ether ship was bound for one of the planets in opposition to the sun at the time of the ship's departure. That is to say the yellow men were sailing for either Neptune or Jupiter.

That the men were returning to some planet much larger than the earth is suggested by their small size and extraordinary agility. No doubt these men found the gravitation of the earth slight compared with the attraction to which they were accustomed. This fact gave them extraordinary vigor.

Now let us consider the serial number that formed Mr. Three's name. It was 1753-12,657,109-654-3.

This gives rise to a most interesting speculation.

The probable number of units contained in a series, when any serial number is given, is computed by multiplying together the component parts of the serial number.

For instance, if one has two series of

twelve each, the whole number of objects would be twenty-four. If one had six major series of two subseries of twelve each, the total number of units would be 144.

Applying this idea to Mr. Three's serial number, one would find the total probable population of Jupiter, or the land of One, by multiplying the component parts of his number together. This reached the enormous product of 14,510,894,498,356. That is to say, fourteen and one-half quadrillions.

This utterly quashes the Incan hypothesis. There is not room in South America for fourteen and a half quadrillion people—there is not room on the globe for such a number. That, in fact, is the probable population of either Neptune or Jupiter. For sake of simplicity we will assume it is Jupiter.

No wonder, then, with such an inconceivable population, the inhabitants of Jupiter are militarized. No wonder they suggested Bolshevism to M. Demetrio-vich.

With such masses of life, all other species of animals are probably extinct. This would explain why the Jovians were so eager to capture specimens of living animals. They desired specimens of fauna as well as radium.

The last point in the record, the chlorophyllaceous blood, has been to me the most difficult to find any analogy for in our terrestrial experience.

However, we must needs grasp the problem firmly and proceed with considered but ample steps toward any conclusion to which it leads.

Chlorophyll is the coloring matter in plants. It possesses the power of utilizing energy directly from sunlight. There is no reason to doubt that in the veins of the Jovians it still retains that peculiar power.

With such an extraordinary fluid in his veins, it might be possible for a Jovian to stand in the sunshine and to obtain from it energy and strength, just as a human being obtains energy and strength by eating vegetables that have stood in the sunshine.

In fact, the first method is no more amazing than the second. If, indeed, there be a difference, undoubtedly our human method is the more fantastic.

The idea of obtaining energy from sunshine, not by standing in it, as any one would suppose, but by eating something else that has stood in it, is grotesque to the verge of madness.

Let us pursue that thought. No doubt in a concourse of fourteen and a half quadrillion inhabitants space would be so dear that there would be no vacant or tillable land. Therefore on Jupiter every man must absorb whatever sunshine he received. There would be no such thing as eating.

This accounts for the amazement of Mr. Three at seeing Standifer eat his lunch.

To put the same idea in another form—the crew of the ether ship were flora, not fauna.

This accounts for the yellow, pear-like texture of their skins. No doubt the young Jovians are green in color. It would also explain why Mr. Three was entirely without anger when attacked and without pity for Pablo's pleadings, or for Standifer when he was burned, or for Ruano when he was murdered.

Anger, pity, love and hatred are the emotional traits of the mammalia. They have been developed through epochs of maternal protection. It is not developed in plants.

Mr. Three was a plant.

It would also explain why Mr. Three took only one animal of each species, instead of a male and a female. Sex is perhaps unknown on Jupiter. Mr. Three was perhaps expecting his animals to bud or sprout.

THE last question to be broached is, How is it possible for plant life to possess mobility?

I wish to recall to the inquirer that here on our own globe the spores of the algae and other plants of that order have the power of swimming freely in the sea. Still, they are plants—plants just as mobile as fishes. They become stationary only at a later stage of their development.

Now, if for some reason these algae spores could retain their mobility, the result would be a walking, swimming or crawling plant.

The line between animal and plant life has never been clearly drawn. It seems

mere fortuity that the first forebear of animal life swam about and caught its sustenance by enveloping it in its gelatinous droplet, rather than by adhering to a reef and drawing its energy directly from the sun.

If that far-off protozoa had clung to the reef, the reader of this paragraph might have been a sycamore or a tamarind—he would not have been a man.

Now Mr. Three's forefather evidently crawled out of the sea into the sunshine but found nothing to envelop; therefore he followed the lip of the Jovian tide up and down, drawing his energy from the sun's rays. The result was a walking vegetable—in short, Mr. Three.

However, gentlemen of the Nobel Prize Foundation, it is not to press the views of the writer that this note was written, but to offer for your consideration as candidates for the fifty thousand dollar Nobel Prize for the year 1920 the names of:

Demetrios Z. Demetrioivich, Herbert M. Pethwick and James B. Standifer.

One of the five prizes for 1920 will be awarded to the man or group of men who have done the greatest service for the advancement of human knowledge during the twelvemonth.

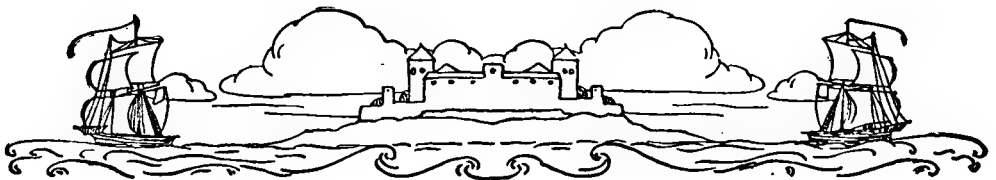
These men, by their observations, taken at the peril of their lives, have blazed new avenues for the use of radium. Their journal suggests the feasibility of the universal use of telepathy, a development now confined to a few adepts and belittled by the unthinking. Their discoveries reveal the possibilities of interplanetary travel and the vast commercial emoluments such a trade would possess. Their journal suggests to the ambitious soul of man a step beyond world citizenship, and that is stellar citizenship. It is a great step and will profoundly modify human thought.

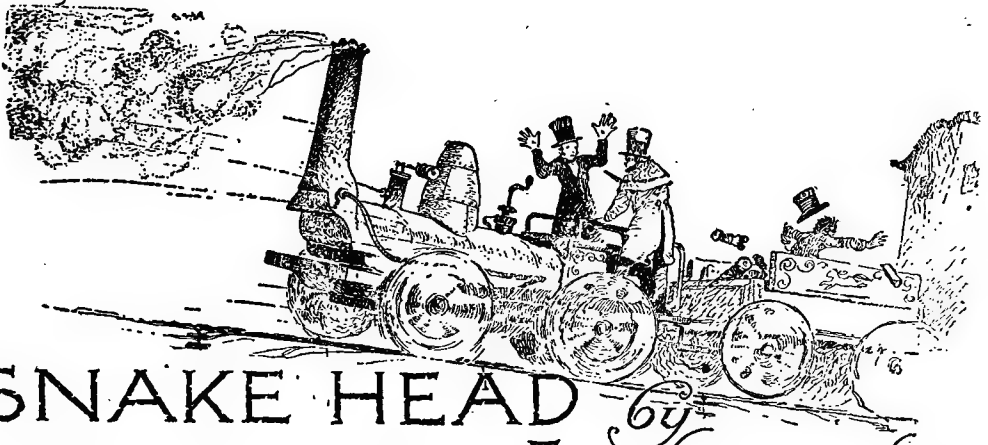
In the past, gentlemen, epoch-making discoveries have been too often rewarded by Bridewell or Bedlam; it is gratifying to know that we have reached a stage of civilization where the benefactors of their race receive instead honor and emolument.

GILBERT H. DeLONG.

New York City,
May, 1920.

Note by Transcriber: It may interest the reader to know that the Nobel Prize was awarded to Dr. Gilbert H. DeLong for the series of brilliant inductions set forth above.—T. S.





SNAKE HEAD *by* Farnham Bishop

Author of "While Rivers Run."

HE had run away to Texas twelve years before and now he had returned to impress his home town, and Utica was indeed impressed as he rode down Genesee Street in the late Summer of 1836.

His mount was a proud little gray mustang, the first Western pony ever seen in that part of New York State. Saddle and bridle were ornately carved and stitched wherever they were not covered with hammered silver. The mighty Mexican spurs on the rider's high-heeled boots, the buttons on his long-fringed buckskin clothes, the braid that flashed on the huge sombrero, were of silver also.

Long black mustaches swept fiercely to the right and left of his sunburned face and long black hair hung down over his shoulders. He was an imposing figure and he knew it. The pomp and pride of his bearing would have made Tarquinius Superbus seem meek and lowly. His protuberant black eyes glanced haughtily at the crowded sidewalks and upper windows without deigning to notice the small boys who ran enraptured beside and after him. It was for their benefit, however, that he was so loudly whistling "Will You Come to the Bower I Have Planted for You?"—a sentimental popular song of the period, which, as all the country knew, had been

sung that Spring by Sam Houston's men as they charged over the Mexican breastworks at San Jacinto.

"Hooray for Texas!" shouted the small boys.

Some of the men on the sidewalks took up the cry. A fashionably gowned young lady waved her handkerchief.

"Look, uncle!" she exclaimed to the gentleman who was escorting her. "There is one of your Texas heroes!"

"One of our Texas humbugs!"

"Why, Uncle Jared!"

Eighteen years old and very romantic, Esther White looked reprovingly down at the little man beside her. Shorter and slighter than his niece, Colonel Jared White was nevertheless feared and respected from Sabine Pass to Corpus Christi. He had scouted with Bowie and Crockett, had followed old Ben Milam through walls and over house-tops at the storming of San Antonio, had been left for dead after the Fannin massacre and had risen from a fever-bed to fight at San Jacinto.

The Republic of Texas had sent him to New York to sell a few million dollars' worth of its new bonds for much-needed cash, and it was in the course of this business that he was visiting his brother's family in Utica. Courteous, soft-spoken, wearing broadcloth and beaver as naturally as did the bankers with whom he was dealing, Colonel White would rather

have faced another Mexican firing-squad than to parade in buckskin down Genesee Street.

"A rascal, bragging slave," he quoted contemptuously. "'The rogue fled from me like quicksilver.' Or rather, my dear, he fled from Santa Anna. I know the fellow well; went to school with him here in Utica when he was little Pete Snyder. 'Snake Head' Snyder, they call him in Texas. He used to ride up and down the Nueces with a gang of others like himself, raiding ranchos and stirring up trouble between us and the Mexicans.

"Nobody shouted louder for war, and nobody ran away faster to the States when war came."

"The coward!" exclaimed Esther indignantly.

"No, my dear," corrected her uncle gently. "He is brave enough physically, but too selfish to fight except to put money in his belt. He has certainly put silver enough on his person and saddlery. Snake Head evidently plans to cut a great dash here in Utica."

"He ought not to be allowed to!" declared the indignant maiden. "To think of his daring to pose as one of the heroes of San Jacinto! If I were you, Uncle Jared, I should write to the *Gazette* and expose him."

Colonel White smiled and shook his head.

"Snake Head Snyder is the sort of cheap swaggerer who never amounts to much in Texas, except to lower us in the opinion of the North. Being myself a Northerner by birth and a Texan by adoption, I can speak freely on that point. And I will admit that I am strongly tempted to thrash him, physically and in print, for the honor of both sections.

"But for the Republic's financial commissioner to enter into a public brawl with a creature like that would hardly help borrow the money we must have if our new-born nation is to live. I fear that I must let private pleasure wait on public business.

"Moreover, this is as much Snyder's home town as it is yours and mine. Let Snake Head live here if he can. Texas is well rid of him. I wonder how he will like Utica."

"WHISTLIN'S mighty dry work," said Snake Head to himself as he neared the foot of Genesee Street. "Reckon I'll 'light and get a dram o' cawn-juice."

Beyond the next cross-street swung a newly painted signboard reading—

THE RAILROAD HOTEL

"Thar's a tavern," thought Snake Head, whose schooling had lasted just long enough for him to read large print, letter by letter. "But what do they mean by 'railroad'?"

His thirst for knowledge, though not for cawn-juice, was instantly satisfied. Across Genesee Street, directly in front of the mustang's nose, rushed a fiery little four-wheeled locomotive. Its tall, slender stack spouted pitch-pine smoke and glowing embers; its boiler was barely long enough to display the polished brass letters that proclaimed it—

THE PRIDE OF ONEIDA

There was neither bell nor whistle, but plenty of hissing and rattle and clangor. Behind the engine clattered a primitive tender and five quaint passenger-cars, tastefully painted in scarlet and olive-green and inscribed in bright gilding:

UTICA AND SCHENECTADY RAILROAD

Snake Head's astounded eyes had but a fleeting vision of all this splendor. Less than that was more than enough for his horse. The gray mustang out-bucked his own proudest past performance, changed ends in mid-air and galloped back up Genesee Street, followed by all the small boys. Only Snake Head remained behind, standing on his shoulder-blades in the middle of a large puddle left by last night's rain.

Turning a somersault, he sat up, looked after the train and gasped:

"Holy suffering —! A land-goin' steamboat!"

"YOU will find the bar in the basement."

The clerk of the Railroad Hotel was profoundly displeased at being mistaken for a bartender, even by the uncouth person who had just swaggered in, for he

prided himself on being the most elegantly dressed young gentleman west of Albany. His coat had the narrowest waist and highest-rolled velvet collar, his waistcoat was more resplendent than the leaves of October, his shirt-pin was monumental, and his haughty countenance was pedestaled upon the tallest possible black satin stock and framed in carefully cut and pomaded side-whiskers. With crushing hauteur he turned away—and then abruptly turned back again.

Large, sacrilegious hands had seized his side-whiskers and jerked them to within six inches of the uncouth person's fierce mustaches.

"What do you want for them clothes?" demanded Snake Head.

"W—what clothes?" gasped the clerk.

There was no one else in the office at the time, and he was too badly frightened to call for help.

"Them you're wearin'. Answer quick or I'll lift all three of your scalps!"

"Two hundred dollars!"

"Take 'em off! I need a change!"

Releasing the clerk, Snake Head jerked the front of his hunting-shirt out of the waistband of his buckskin breeches, felt beneath it, untied and threw upon the desk a bulging money-belt. At the sight of it, the clerk, who had been on the point of diving through the door behind him with loud outcries for the police, turned himself into a door-mat adorned with the word "Welcome."

"Wouldn't you like a room, sir, in which to make the change?" he purred ingratiatingly. "And, in case the garments should not prove a perfect fit, might I not suggest sending for our best tailor, hatter and bootmaker?"

The thought of getting fat commissions out of his own hungry creditors made him irresistible.

"Round 'em up!" commanded Snake Head. "Gimme the swellest room you've got. My folks are all dead and I'll camp here till I build me a house. Right now I want a buffaler steak with chicken fixings, three kinds of pie and a jug of Monongahela."

"I shall have them sent to your room at once, sir. Er—in the case of guests arriving without baggage, a small deposit in advance is customary."

"Take it out of that," said Snake

Head, shoving the money-belt across the desk.

The clerk opened it reverently and, while seeming to search for a bill of the proper denomination, made a swift and practised analysis of the whole thick mass of bank-notes with which the belt was stuffed. He was, by virtue of his position, deeply learned in the strange ways of the fantastic paper money of the period. It was a wise man who knew his own dollar in those days of happy counterfeiters, wildcat State banks and no telegraph.

"These notes are all on the Farmers' Bank of Jacksonburg!"

The hotel clerk's voice was like that of the mining-camp assayer when he says "iron-pyrites."

"What if they be?" demanded Snake Head. "I've spent ten thousand dollars out of that there belt, betwixt here and New Orleans, and got a hundred cents' worth to the dollar every time."

"Yes, but that was before it was known that the Jacksonburg Bank had failed."

"Who says it's failed?" roared Snake Head. "Show me the cuss who says my money's no good!"

"New York *Commercial Advertiser*," quavered the clerk, backing away from the desk and throwing a folded newspaper as he might have thrown a beef-steak to a pursuing wolf-pack. "Came this morning's train—most reliable—ask local bank—two blocks up Genesee—close in ten minutes!"

With this parting advice the clerk disappeared through the door behind him like a woodchuck into its hole.

Snake Head leaned against the deserted desk, too stunned even to swear. He did not look at the paper. He knew that his money must be "powerful bad if that son-of-a-coyote can't stand the smell of it." And yesterday it had been all right. His fortune had vanished as suddenly as it had come.

He had found it up an alley in Nacogdoches the night he had reached that town in his flight to the Louisiana line. The place was packed with refugees; few married men dared let their families remain in Texas after the fall of the Alamo. Snake Head had no family; nothing but a worn-out pony, two pistols, a greasy suit of buckskin, an appetite

and a thirst. Tying his mount where he could find it again in a hurry, if necessary, he had started to hunt for whatever he could beg or safely steal. Snake Head was hungry and desperate enough to "stick up" a saloon single-handed, but he found Nacogdoches occupied and patrolled by two battalions of United States Infantry sent across the border from Fort Jesup.

He sneaked up the nearest alley, an unsuccessful and penniless bandit; he came out three minutes later a rich and happy man. The original owner of the money-belt continued to sleep soundly and sonorously, skintful of sugar-cane-rum, in the deep, soft mud where Snake Head had tripped and fallen over him. Who he was and what he said when he woke are lost to history.

Probably it was much the same sort of language that Snake Head began to use as he realized that he was again reduced to his horse, his weapons and the clothes he stood in—all of better quality than he had ever owned before, but that was all. He had given his last silver dollar to the boy who had caught and led back the gray mustang. If the local bank upheld the hotel clerk's verdict, then let Utica beware!

SHAWN EGAN, straight from Lisconnor, County Clare, stepped ashore from the immigrant-boat that had brought him to Utica by the Erie Canal, and walked up Genesee Street to find the office of some contractor who could use a good pick-and-shovel man. A gentle, downy-cheeked lad was Shawn, six feet two in his hobnailed brogues, with his thigh and chest muscles straining the stout homespun knee-breeches and long-tailed coat. He had a bit of the clay in his caubeen, a bit of a bundle in his left hand and a bit of the thorn—a beautiful stick of the true blackthorn—in his right. Nobody paid him the slightest attention. Paddies were commonplace in Utica.

But mustangs were not. An interested little crowd stood about the hitching-post in front of the Railroad Hotel. Shawn Egan stopped and found it easy to look over the heads of those in front of him at the queer little gray horse and the grand silver saddle. Indeed, he thought, there were great wonders in America!

Suddenly Shawn felt himself shouldered roughly aside, elbowed in the ribs and spurred in the ankle. Snake Head was impatient to reach the bank before it closed and childishly glad of a chance to work off his ill-temper on those who stood in his way. But a hand from behind fell heavily on his shoulder and whirled him about to meet the disapproving eyes of Shawn Egan.

"And what manner av man are you?" asked the Irishman, "to go rampagin' through a crowd av dacint folk, like Terry O'Niel's black bull when he saw the redcoats?"

"Yowee!" yelled Snake Head, slamming his sombrero on the sidewalk and jumping high enough in the air to crack his heels together twice before he came down. Like a Homeric warrior or a tom cat, he believed in preliminary prancing and oratory before settling down to the real business of a fight.

"I'm Snake Head Snyder, the night-ridin' Nemesis of the Nueces! I'm death to all pizen serpints that dares to crawl afore my face and eyes! Reptiles, Injuns, greasers or humans, I grab 'em by the rattles and crack their heads off! I'm the man who found Santy Anna hidin' in the chaparral and snaked him out by the left hind-laig! I'm a tromplin' ten-toed Texican! I'm a roarin', rampin', snortin', stampin', stampedin', long-horn steer! I'm the bellowin' buffalar bull of the Brazos! Wahoo! Wowie! Hunt your holes, for I'm a-comin' like a prairie-fire in a high wind!"

Shaking his long hair clear of his coat-collar, Snake Head snatched out the eleven-inch bowie knife that hung between his shoulder-blades and brandished it on high.

Cling!

Shawn Egan's blackthorn sent the knife flying in two pieces across the street.

Whack!

Darkness and sleep descended together on the night-ridin' Nemesis of the Nueces.

Shawn Egan walked peacefully on up Genesee Street.

THE bank was closed and a young man was locking the door from the outside when Snake Head reined in be-

side the curb. The young man looked up and at once came across the sidewalk with his hand outstretched and a knowing smile on his pale and rather effeminate face.

"Welcome back to Utica, Peter Snyder," he said.

"A — of a welcome I've been having up to now!" answered Snake Head, trying to recall the other's name. "Is the bank closed, Mr. —?"

"Phelps—Gilbert Phelps. Yes, I'm just through locking up."

"Bert Phelps! I recollect the flyin' squirrels you put in the teacher's desk and the lickin' I got for it. You allus did have the usefulest memory. Workin' in the bank now?"

"I am the cashier."

"Then you're the man I'm lookin' for to pass judgement on some money I've got."

"Come up to my lodgings," said Phelps cordially.

Once there, he set out whisky and cigars, ran through the contents of the money-belt and shook his head.

"Not worth three cents on the dollar," he declared decisively. "You have something else beside Jacksonburg notes, I hope."

"A mustang, twelve hundred dollars' worth of saddle and bridle and a pair of silver-mounted hoss-pistols."

Snake Head, his arrogance beaten out of him, sighed sadly into his empty glass.

"Know anybody who wants to buy, Bert?"

"Why not use them?" asked Phelps in soft, suggestive tones.

"Use 'em? How?"

"As you did just before you left us in the Spring of 1824."

Snake Head sprang to his feet and glared ferociously at his host, who was looking at an English sporting-print of "Life on the Road." The implication was too much for the Texan.

"I never robbed no stage-coach!" he shouted.

"I never said you did," replied Phelps. "Though one was robbed on the turnpike, between Schenectady and here, the night after you left Utica for Texas. As you say, I have a most useful memory. For instance, I remember that day after

tomorrow is pay-day for the Paddies digging the Chenango Canal."

What Snake Head said about Paddies would have shocked an Orangeman.

"Show me the coach their pay-roll money's comin' on!" he concluded.

"There are no more coaches in this part of the world, my simple child of the prairie," said the sophisticated Utican. "The money is coming on the train."

"The train! You mean the—the railroad?"

Phelps nodded. Snake Head rose and strode to the door.

"Then it can come for all of me!" he declared vehemently. "I've seen what it's comin' on and seen a-plenty! All Sam Houston's army couldn't stop it."

"On the contrary, two determined men could do it easily."

"Anybody ever tried?" demanded Snake Head.

"No. That is what makes it so easy," replied Phelps. "Nobody has ever robbed a train, therefore everybody thinks a train can never be robbed. Consequently there is no longer a guard with a blunderbuss across his lap, as there was in the old stage-coach days, but a mere unarmed conductor. Passengers have ceased to carry pistols for their own protection. Billy Hyde, the bank messenger, still carries one by virtue of his office, but to my knowledge he has not drawn the charge or changed the priming these six months. Yet tomorrow he will have nearly ninety thousand dollars in his carpet-bag."

"Humbug!" cried the incredulous Snake Head.

"Elementary arithmetic, Peter," said Phelps, beckoning him back to the table. "Sit down and see if you can do this in your head. If one Paddy gets a dollar a day on the Chenango Canal, how much will three thousand Paddies get?"

"Three thousand dollars," answered Snake Head after deep thought and a long drink.

"Multiplied by twenty-seven working days in the month of August equals eighty-one thousand—plus seven or eight thousand more for the foremen and engineers equals something worth trying for, doesn't it?"

"Plenty a heap! But how's anybody

goin' to make that fire-spittin' devil-on-wheels stop when it doesn't want to?"

"Pooh! Nothing simpler!" said Phelps. "I have had much experience with railroads. I have taken not less than eleven journeys on the trains since the opening of the Mohawk & Hudson in 1831. I have made a careful study of their vulnerable points, till I have devised a dozen ways, all equally sure, of stopping a train at will. I have long meditated such an enterprise as this, but till now I lacked a trusty and capable assistant. As soon as I saw you, I said ——"

"Hold on a minute!" interrupted Snake Head, struck by a fearful thought. "Suppose we get us that cyarpet-bag full of dollars, how do we know when we come to spend it some other —— bank won't have gone bust on us? If ever I get back to Texas I'm sure goin' to stick to cattle and silver."

"A shrewd and pertinent question. The answer is this: Since the rioting last Spring, when the Paddies were paid in depreciated bills and the militia had to be called out, the canal men have been getting their pay in notes on the United States Bank of Philadelphia—and those are as good as gold."

"And a powerful sight easier to pack when we-all light out for Texas together."

Phelps started.

"How did you know I was going to Texas?" he cried.

"Plenty of cashiers like you down thar already," chuckled the simple child of the prairie.

"KEEP her hot, Steve!" called the engineer of the afternoon west-bound on the U. & S. to his sweating fireman. "Chuck her full o' chips. Goin' to take all the steam we can raise to haul this load up Long Hill."

"My gosh yes, Ira. Seven full cars—that's a dretful lot for any engine to pull upgrade. I dunno but you'd better ask some of the folks to walk that piece at the top where it's steepest."

"Walk ——!" retorted Ira. "None o' my passengers hain't never been asked to get out and walk yet, nor never will. The Pride of Oneida's done made the grade every trip and she'll do it today or bust her b'iler!"

"Guess I wouldn't feel much hotter if she did," panted the "chip-tosser," toiling in the full glare of the August sun.

There was no cab; engineer and fireman stood on the open foot-plate, guarded only by a light railing, and took the weather as it came.

At that, they were probably as well off, except on rainy days, as the passengers. Twenty-four of these were packed into a four-wheeled car of European pattern that looked like three stage-coach bodies placed end to end. Each compartment held eight victims, squeezed side by side and knee to knee on two hard, narrow seats. To open the tiny windows meant to let in a cloud of wood-smoke mixed with large red-hot embers. There was no air in Summer, no heat in Winter, no room for a grown man to stand upright and no place for baggage except your lap. The vibration, however, was the best thing in the world for a sluggish liver.

Rushing across the flat at the terrific speed of nearly twenty-five miles an hour, the locomotive charged valiantly up the lower slopes of Long Hill. Steeper and steeper rose the grade, slower and slower crept the train, the little engine pulling and panting its hardest, while the passengers made bets as to whether or not they would have to get out and walk. Some prophesied that they would have to push. But, defying the pessimists, the Pride of Oneida, cunningly nursed and prayerfully exhorted by Ira, was triumphantly mounting the very summit when suddenly her driving-wheels slipped and spun helplessly round and round.

"Greased, by ——!" cried Ira.

His further remarks were drowned by three mournful blasts on the conductor's long tin horn, signifying: All out!

Doors flew open down the length of the train. Out swarmed the passengers, the men gallantly helping the ladies down from the high, narrow running-boards. Because of an awkward ledge of rock on the left-hand side of the train, it was necessary to get off on the right.

Most of the passengers had alighted and were moving toward the engine when out of the bushes stepped two masked men, each pointing a pair of long flint-lock pistols.

"Stand and deliver!" cried the shorter of the two bandits in the classic phrase of the eighteenth century.

He wore a long black cloak and a broad-rimmed, black felt hat. So theatrical was his appearance that the conductor leaped to the conclusion that this was a practical joke—something he never could stand.

"I'll larn ye to play pranks on the railroad!" he shouted and rushed at the black bandit with upraised horn. A flint-lock roared; the conductor stopped in mid-stride and held up his hands, one of them still grasping the mouth-piece of his weapon that had been cut neatly in half by the heavy bullet.

"Stick 'em up, everybody!" ordered the second bandit, a bearded ruffian in a fashionable overcoat and bell-crowned beaver. Everybody obeyed except four gentlemen in whose arms four ladies had already fainted with early-Victorian promptness.

The train itself was trembling as if in abject terror. There was only a crude hand-brake on the engine and none whatever on the cars, so the engineer had to keep running up to the beginning of the greased section of track and sliding back again. He dared not slide too far because Snake Head, wearing the beaver hat, false whiskers and no spurs, was nervously covering him with both horse-pistols.

Phelps, whose own more picturesque disguise betrayed a weakness for the Byronic, stood nearer the rear of the train and looked anxiously through the crowd of passengers for the familiar face of Billy Hyde, the bank messenger. The cashier-highwayman knew exactly what he would do as soon as Hyde descended from the rear compartment of the last car, where, being an experienced and prudent traveler, he always sat. Either the messenger would bring the carpet-bag of money with him, or, what was more likely, he would leave it behind.

Whichever happened, Phelps was prepared to get the bag himself. Then, with a blow from the heavy barrel of his unloaded pistol, he would knock out the coupling-link between the last car and the rest of the train, jump on the running-board of the car as it started down the grade and coast to the bottom of the

hill, where he had persuaded Snake Head to tether both their horses.

As for Snake Head himself, he could stay behind and explain things to the crowd. If he survived to tell the authorities that Phelps was fleeing to Texas, so much the better for Phelps, for he had decided to go to Canada instead. The state of his accounts at the bank made it imperative that he start for one place or the other without delay.

Again Phelps looked at all the variously whiskered faces before him, but the fat bank-messenger was not there. A horrible thought came to the bandit's mind.

"The infernal idiot must have missed the train!"

Then he realized that Billy Hyde had never done such a thing before, nor would the trusty messenger have left the train with the rest. He would have remained aboard to guard the money. Though from where he stood Phelps could not see inside the last car, he visualized Hyde crouching at bay beside the carpet-bag. Instead of storming the fortress, the black bandit summoned the garrison to surrender.

"I see you skulking there!" he called ferociously. "Come out with your hands up or I'll shoot you down like a dog!"

"I'm coming! I'm coming!" rang a startled chorus.

Three agitated men bounced out of three different and totally unsuspected compartments and from somewhere else in the train a feminine voice cried—

"Just a minute!"

Then through the open doorway of the last compartment squeezed the impressive figure of Billy Hyde. He came through sideways because he had to—left side first and back to the engine. As if to steady himself while he lowered one foot to the running-board, he grasped with his upraised left hand the rail that ran along the edge of the low roof. Shifting his grip, the fat man made an amazing pirouette and faced about on the four-inch running-board as easily as a drill-sergeant on parade. Now he stood on the narrow ledge with his face to the locomotive, his left hand clinging to the railing on the car roof, and his right hand holding a ponderous dragoon pistol of the War of 1812.

"Back her up, Ira!" he called to the engineer. "Let her slide!"

Ira gallantly threw her into reverse, even as both bandits and the bank-messenger pulled trigger. Contrary to expectation, the old dragoon pistol went off with a mighty boom and blew a hole through Snake Head's beaver hat. Phelps' bullet shattered a car window and ruined the contents of a hand-box; Snake Head's flew high and painfully barked the knuckles of Billy Hyde's left hand.

"Ouch!" cried the messenger.

Instinctively he clapped the injured knuckles to his mouth and sucked them, just as the train started down the hill with a jerk. Still sucking his knuckles, Billy Hyde flew off the running-board and came to earth.

"Stop that train!" shouted Phelps and ran to leap on board as it clattered past with rapidly increasing speed. But the passengers were in his way and, now that both his pistols were empty, they lowered their hands and put them to eager use. The conductor, two Syracusans, a Utican and a horse-doctor from Canajoharie, all hit Phelps at the same time and piled up together on top of him. The bold black bandit's brief career was over.

"Rob the rail-cars, will ye?" whooped a Shawangunk mountaineer as he tugged at the nearest fence. "We'll larn ye how to ride a rail!"

SNAKE HEAD made no attempt to rescue his fallen comrade; his thoughts were on the ninety thousand dollars. For a prize like that he would have stormed Santa Anna's camp single-handed; nor could the mysterious terrors of the "land-goin' steamboat" stop him now. Standing close beside the engine as it started down the hill, he made two mighty bounds in time to catch the foot-plate railing and haul himself aboard.

At the sight of a bearded pirate coming over the rail like the leader of an old-time boarding-party, Steve, the fireman, fled back into the tender and jumped from the top of the wood-pile to the ground. Ira, the engineer, turned and looked directly into the spacious muzzle of a horse-pistol.

"Keep a-gallopin'!" commanded Snake Head. "Pull up at the foot o' the hill!"

The engine was galloping indeed, see-sawing and pitching on its short wheel-base like a rocking-horse. Jerked and jolted about, as the springless little locomotive banged and bounced over the rough track, Snake Head had to cling to the railing with his free hand to keep from being thrown off.

"I sure was nine kinds of a locoed fool," he reflected bitterly, "to go and take off my spurs."

The wind of their backward passage rushed in through the open furnace door and out through the lofty stack, making the fire roar and the safety-valve pop and spout steam till Snake Head's untutored mind, filled with fearful stories of steamboat explosions, could stand no more.

"Stop it!" he yelled.

The engineer caught the note of terror in the bandit's voice and straightway devised a scheme for his undoing.

"Come here and help me quick," cried crafty Ira, "or we'll both be blown sky-high!"

Snake Head left the railing, pitched forward as they hit a rail-joint and fetched up against a broad, hairy chest. A huge black hand seized the horse-pistol and threw it into a cow-pasture, where it was picked up half a century later and presented to the Oneida Historical Society as a relic of the Revolution.

"Now I've got ye!" grunted Ira, who had not had a fight for two years because everybody in Schenectady knew him too well to start one.

Crushing the astounded Snake Head in his mighty arms, Ira picked him up, swung him about and laid him flat on his back on top of the boiler, heels hanging down over the fire-box.

"You greased my rails and sp'ilt my record!" he shouted, holding his victim firmly by the whiskers. "Stay thar and fry in your own grease, gol-ram ye!"

But Snake Head did not stay to be fried. He arose and went away from that place without his false beard and with a bound that carried him to the cord-wood piled in the back of the tender. Not realizing that Ira the irate was now too busy trying to get his train under control to catch and cook him any more, Snake Head started to jump as he had seen the fireman do.

He drew back just in time at the sight of the ground rushing past with unearthly speed. He must get away before the engine blew up or the engineer came after him—it did not much matter which—but where could he go? Before him bobbed the closed end of a passenger-car Snake Head thought of climbing on the roof; then he noticed the rail along the edge, which made him think of the fat man with the pistol. That must have been the bank-messenger. The ninety thousand dollars must be lying unguarded at the other end of the train!

Now Snake Head observed the running-board on the side of the car and remembered what Phelps had told him about the conductor's walking along it to take up tickets. Snake Head may have shrunk from battle, but with Ira behind him and a bag of money in front he could travel worse roads than that.

The little cars were low; it was easy for a man of his height to reach the roof-rail from the tender. It was harder to jump and swing, but, as soon as he felt his feet strike the running-board, the worst was over. Hanging on to rail and door-handles with the grip of a drowning man, he inched the length of the first car and straddled the perilous gap between it and the second.

In spite of slamming doors, the eternal pitching and perking and an occasional hot pine-ember down the back of his neck, Snake Head crept on, faster and faster, to the third car—the fourth—fifth—sixth—and last. As he passed the windows of the center compartment, he heard a frightened scream, looked in and saw a remarkably good-looking and obviously terrified young lady retreating into the farthest corner.

"All right, pretty gal!" said Snake Head, grinning below the mask Phelps had made for him. "I'll come in thar and tend to you in a minute!"

"Don't you dare!" was the spirited reply as he moved on and sprang into the last compartment—now at the very front of the train as it backed down the hill. The floor and both seats were strewn with band-boxes, paper parcels and carpet-bags. Eagerly Snake Head tore them open, one after another, turning each upside-down to pour out floods of clothing, mingled with hairbrushes and

pint flasks. At last he opened the smallest, dingiest carpet-bag of the lot. It was two-thirds full of neat packages of new banknotes.

"Bert Phelps sure spoke the truth for once," soliloquized Snake Head. "Wonder how he's gettin' on with the crowd back thar on top of the hill?"

Glancing out of the window, he saw that the train was nearing the place where they had left the horses and was beginning to slow up, so that by the time they reached it he could safely jump. In the meanwhile he could amuse himself with the helpless beauty in the next compartment. Stooping over the carpet-bag, which happened to be resting on the middle of the seat toward the center of the car, Snake Head closed it carefully, grasped the handle and began the fun by shouting—

"Look out, pretty gal, hyar I come!"

Even as he spoke he came, though not at all as he had intended. A mysterious and irresistible force, acting from below and behind him, seized Snake Head Snyder, lifted him off his feet and drove his head and shoulders through the flimsy partition between the two compartments. His long, thick hair, tucked up under his beaver hat, saved his skull, though the hat was forced down upon his shoulders, blindfolding his eyes and muffling his remarks.

His first thought was that he had been pursued and overtaken by Ira. Then he realized that he was held in the grip of no mortal hand, but by something long and cold that ran up his back between his skin and his buckskin clothes—grown tight with good living on the journey north. He could not turn to see what it was, nor raise a hand to feel. His legs kicked helplessly in mid-air, his arms and shoulders were wedged fast in the broken partition, but his hands still clung to the precious carpet-bag in one compartment, while in the other his voice rumbled ferociously inside the beaver hat.

"Stop it!" said an indignant feminine voice. "I will not listen to such language! Stop it at once!"

"I'll say what I — please!" Snake Head roared defiantly.

"You will do nothing of the kind!"

Two small hands grasped the curly brim of the beaver and tugged with all

their strength. Off came the hat, tweaking his nose and ears severely in the passage. Crushing it flat between her knee and the seat, the young lady thrust the edge of the thick, fuzzy disk into Snake Head's open mouth and held it there.

"M-M-M-M-M-M!" was all that he could say.

"Will you promise to be good and do as you are told?" demanded that experienced and successful young school-ma'am, Miss Esther White.

"M-M!" mumbled Snake Head affirmatively.

"Very well," she said firmly, removing the gag and stepping up on the seat above which his head projected from the wall like a gargoyle on a Gothic cathedral. "Hold your head still while I untie this knot!"

Feeling like a freshly-spanked and utterly subdued four-year-old, the wretched bandit dared not stir or utter a protest as the girl stripped him of his mask.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "So it's you, is it?"

SITTING down on the seat opposite, Esther White looked at him in a way that made him writhe and wriggle his hardest to draw back through the hole. Unable either to escape or to meet her eyes, he gazed despairingly at the floor.

"You may well hang your head, Peter Snake Head Snyder," she said severely. "Don't you ever let me catch you in Utica, or my uncle catch you in Texas again!"

At her supernatural knowledge of his name, he trembled.

"Wh—who mought your uncle be, ma'am?" he faltered, with a strong suspicion that the gentleman in question was Old Nick's younger brother.

"Colonel Jared White."

"Holy—yes'm!" gasped Snake Head, checking himself barely in time as she reached for the gag. "Just turn me loose and I'll start a-travelin' and never come near either of you till—I mean the Nueces—freezes over!"

"And mind, you are not to whistle that tune again, either."

"What tune, ma'am?"

"Will You Come to the Bower I Have Planted for You?"

"Yes'm, I'll come," he answered audaciously. "Only I'm sort of planted myself, right now. Will you please tell me what the—I mean, what's hit and hung me up hyar like jerked beef?"

"The strap-iron has come loose on one of the ribbon-pieces, I think," she explained kindly and lucidly.

"Yes'm. Whatever that mought be, it sure has torn loose for fair!"

"I mean—you know the rails the wheels of the train run on?"

"Yes'm," nodded Snake Head, who had studied the strange structure with interest while he and Phelps were greasing it with a side of bacon. "Wheels run along two big oak timbers, 'bout six inches square and maybe so four'n a half feet apart."

"Those are the ribbon-pieces," said Esther in her best school-ma'am's manner. "To keep the wheels from wearing them down too fast, a long flat bar of iron, about two inches wide and a quarter of an inch thick, is nailed on top of the inner edge of each wooden rail or ribbon-piece. But the pounding of the trains often loosens the nails until the ends of the strap-iron stick up in the air. Then, when the wheel of a car coming from the other direction strikes the loose end, it rolls under instead of over it, thrusting the long iron bar up through the floor of the car. That must be what has happened to you. I'll come and see."

Not till then, as she left her compartment to enter his, did Snake Head realize that the train had been standing still since his head had crashed through the partition. Unable to look behind him, he heard her come in and wondered if she were going to set him free. Instead, he felt the almost-forgotten carpet-bag jerked suddenly from his grasp.

"So that is what you've been up to!" said Esther, returning to her compartment and sitting down with the ninety thousand dollars in her lap. "Stop that noise this instant, or ——"

She held up the beaver threateningly and the plaintively-swearing Snake Head forced himself to obey.

"Won't you please turn me loose, ma'am, and let me go?" he begged.

"You do not deserve to be released," replied the implacable maiden, daintily retying her bonnet-strings. "Nor do I see

how I could possibly free you from your present predicament, Mr. Snyder, except by cutting your clothes off with my embroidery scissors, which would be extremely improper and therefore entirely out of the question."

At that moment, Ira, the engineer, having finished prying the derailed tender back on the track with a handy fence-rail, threw open the throttle. The Pride of Oneida started with a mighty jerk that pulled the loose rail out of the last car like a parsnip out of wet loam.

Snake Head felt himself withdrawn from the hole in the partition as suddenly as he had been driven in. Down he sat with a resounding thump on top of the seat behind him, through which the rail-end had entered, and there he remained while the last six feet of strap-iron slid out from between his shirt and skin, taking small samples of each with it as it sped.

Then he was free—free to go into the next compartment, recapture the treasure and take vengeance on her who had so humiliated him. Opening the door beside him, Snake Head sprang out on the running-board with a fierce, triumphant yell.

A hundred times louder and fiercer was the roar that greeted him as he appeared on the outside of the car. Down the hill to meet the returning train came a charging mob of trainmen and passen-

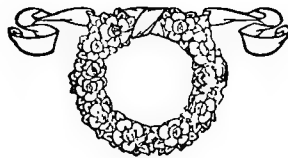
gers, brandishing clubs, stones and captured pistols. Above the rear-guard bobbed the hapless Phelps, astride a fence-rail borne on the shoulders of two stalwart men.

They were near and he was being carried to meet them, but Snake Head saw that there might be time. Two steps along the running-board and he was at the door of the center compartment. Through the glass panel he saw that it was absolutely empty. Both girl and carpet-bag had disappeared.

His heart struck cold with a sudden chill of superstitious terror. Snake Head turned and saw that in another minute he would be in the midst of the avenging host. With a howl like a baffled wolf, he jumped from the running-board and rolled down the steep embankment.

Picking himself up, he looked back at the train as it drew away from him and saw Esther White, carpet-bag in hand, standing on the running-board on the other side of the last car. Anticipating his coming, she had slipped out and hidden there just in time.

Hurdling the fence six inches ahead of his nearest pursuer, Snake Head managed to reach his mustang in time to mount and gallop away to parts unknown. But the legend of the first train robbery lingered long on the Utica & Schenectady and ever afterward a loose rail-end was called a "snake head."





IF A FELLER DIDN'T WEAKEN

*By Monte
Reinhart
Hazlett*



THE manager of the Majestic said something when he remarked that "The Midnight Hold-up" would take like hot cakes in Roaring Gulch. It did. The population gravitated to the ticket window as eagerly as range cattle to a salt-lick. The unventilated storeroom nickelodeon was packed to suffocation. The enthusiastic audience in expressing approval stamped the dust from the old pine floor and sucked it into its lungs. The barroom scenes appealed through familiarity, of course, but it was the hold-up that fascinated the crowd and fetched the younger generation to its feet.

Now, even to this day there were bold hold-ups in that region. The trouble was that those who were willing to hand over a large portion of their earthly possessions in order to witness one never could manage to be present. So they stood on their hind legs, leaned across three rows of seats and, with hastily laid bets and eyes bulging, gulped down the turns worked in the picture by a knickerbockered movie director from the East with a crew of cushion-bred actors.

Here and there in the audience were old-timers who neither rose to their feet nor applauded, who grunted with disgust and did not object when others cut off their view at exciting moments. To these the picture was as barren ore to the gold assayer; they had seen the real thing. They attended the show merely

because other places in the Gulch were lonely during the evening's entertainment.

In a seat well to the fore, where not a single exciting detail could possibly escape him, sitting on or about the mid-portion of his spine, slouched young Reginald de Lancy Childers, known locally as "Pieface." No sound of approval came from him, neither did he show signs of ennui; he merely sat and stared with the general expression of skimmed milk.

So pale were his eyes you might have questioned their power of sight. If he didn't gnaw his food instead of chewing it, why did he have such protruding, rodent-like teeth? His hair was the shade of tow. Once upon a time it had been called golden and had hung in performed ringlets, and Pieface had answered—when in the answering mood—to the endearment of "Petsie"; he had once worn Fauntleroy velvet suits and, under the care of a fondling mother and a special maid, had lorded it over a luxurious apartment. This was not exactly the start in life that Reginald de Lancy ought to have drawn.

Those days of velvet and cushions had terminated suddenly in his thirteenth year and seemed now to the youth, who sometimes found it necessary to resort to bits of flour-sacking and bailing-wire to supply missing portions of his raiment, to stretch back into a former incarnation. Life had been as harsh the past few years

as it had been soft before. For this he wholly blamed his sire, never taking into account his own shortcomings, for it was his dad who, six years previously, deciding the East was no place to rear a man child, had gone back and surreptitiously lifted him from the tender care of the special maid and fetched him West to grow up with the country.

Lem Childers, ex-cattle rustler, mining-camp gambler and general all-rounder, did his durndest to make a man of the spindling youth. He took him to the roughest camps and showed him the life from the inside out. But the ex-*Lord Fauntleroy* was hopeless. There wasn't an atom of regular he-man stuff in his flabby hide. Wherefore Lem lost interest in the boy just as, years before, he had quit his soft, giddy little mother. Lem just naturally plumped him down and left him, much as one would "lose" a superfluous kitten. This chancing to come about in the Gulch, Reginald de Lancy had remained there.

Once in so often Lem appeared on the scene, settled up the kid's board bills and outfitted him. For the rest, Pieface was pretty much on his own. For the past year he had been entirely so. That is, ever since the night Lem accidentally discovered with what genuine relish the male population of the place looked forward to his presence at a surprise doings they had very thoughtfully fixed up for him. It was a necktie party with hempen trimmings. Lem suddenly remembered an appointment about one thousand miles distant and didn't stay over for the party.

Down at Cummins' Ford the stage had been held up in broad daylight. With the stage was Tom Slocum, on his way out to bank the roll just received for his claim. He had worked hard for that roll, yet it took him two, or maybe three, seconds to pass it over. It was careless of him not to do it in quarter the time, for the highwayman was in a hurry. Slocum was dead before he hit the ground. He left a young widow unused to the West, a frail little daughter and a crippled son. It seemed rather raw—even for the Gulch.

The description of the lone bandit fitted Lem very well, and it was at this period that Lem's good health failed him completely, causing him to slope out of

town between suns, presumably for a balmier, healthier region.

This left Reginald de Lancy high and dry to shift for himself, which he was as capable of doing as a fish washed up on shore. It is not on record, however, that any one ever went hungry in Roaring Gulch, so, with the aid of the women-folks, he managed to pull through. He could frame lace curtains—don't ever fancy the Gulch hadn't any!—straighten out obstreperous stove-pipes and do other odd jobs. Often the only perfectly sober male in town, he came in handy.

Besides, he was the cunningest little old pussy-footer in Gunnison County. Any wisp of news a back-fence gossip-fest was yearning for, he could, one way or another, supply. He soon found that nosing out smelly news was an open sesame to well-stocked larders, and he never permitted any one to nurse the illusion he was doing this or anything else for his health.

His fingers closed over a tip with the smoothness of the most experienced lackey, but the remuneration he preferred was a whopping big home-cooked meal. In fact, it often turned out that he could not possibly give any information until the food was forthcoming or had been properly devoured. So, in divers ways he managed to eat often enough to save the county the expense of interring him.

ALTHOUGH young Childers' face did not register an opinion one way or another of the "Midnight Hold-up," his mind was not entirely blank, for within it an idea was beginning to whirl into form. When the show was over he surged into an aisle which happened to be filled with women and children and began shouldering his way through them. Pieface was a rough person when among those who would not strike back, but, his mind off gathering wool, he unexpectedly brought up against the sturdy bulk of Billy Gaines. Pieface instantly recoiled. Billy glanced back over his shoulder and then called across the hall to a pal.

"Hey, 'Spudsy'! Did you think anything could be funnier than Pieface's 'inheritance'?"

"Nope," came Spudsy's ready reply, "but this darned photy-play sure was." And the crowd laughed good-naturedly.

"Funny as Pieface's inheritance" had been a witticism in the Gulch ever since Lem's discovery that his son's liver was the general color of his hair. The disgruntled sire had spoken in the vernacular of the West and with expert profanity.

His hand-reared offspring had comprehended only the words "inheritance from his mother." Immediately the young tenderfoot had gone forth and attempted to lord it over the small boys of the village, with dire and fulsome results. Then, when the mother died in the East leaving not a penny, Pieface, not knowing the mode of her life, could not rightly figure it out; yet he never entirely lost hope.

After the Slocum affair he brightened noticeably. His old man was always well heeled and would now be in the way of stopping a bullet sooner or later, and his dutiful son hoped it would be sooner. Then Pieface figured he'd come into his own. Inadvertently he had dropped a remark to this effect, hence the renewed ragging.

He failed to escape before the next sally of the local wits, which he knew was sure to follow.

"What'll Pieface do with his inheritance when he gets it?"

"Divvy with the widdy Slocum, of course!"

Whether or not his tormentors ever reached the feelings of Reginald de Lancy no one could say. If he had inherited nothing else from his father he had his perfectly good poker face. You could never tell by looking at him what the kid had up his sleeve. Old-timers who knew Lem best persistently predicted that at some unexpected moment a spark of the father's cool nerve would flash forth in the son.

Certain small boys thought the moment had come on one occasion when Pieface caught them a mile up the Gulch and proceeded to vent some of his spleen upon them. Later in the day, when he had been properly soused up and down on the lower end of a rope in the icy waters of the creek, he knew, and the Gulch knew, that thereafter the small fry of the region were safe from the predicted spark.

Pieface gave no hint of the state of his mind as he meandered down the street;

he didn't even kick up the heavy dust at the crossings for the benefit of the happily chattering young folks following. Possibly he yearned to drop in at Skidmore's and irrigate any irritation he felt, for in passing he stretched his long neck over the swinging doors for a look at the jovial bunch limbering up for the usual night-cap before turning in.

Pieface, however, never entered where there were men only. They could not put him into the dog-pound and keep him there, because there was no such institution in that part of the world, but they could prevent him from standing among them with a foot on the brass rail.

Once upon a time, having just acquired the ability to burn a stogy to the bitter end without turning green, he had strolled cockily in through the swinging doors, his thumbs in his suspenders and with the air of the Sultan of Turkey. But he had come out again as soon as he could make the turn. He learned that day that certain human frailties that might get by on Fifth Avenue come to earth with a dull and sickening thud when practised in the more rarefied air west of the Rockies.

Since that time he had indulged his taste for braggadocio and stogies down behind the boulders. When not sherlock-holmesing, he spent much of his time thus.

Just the same, Pieface had his friends. There was the widow Jones, or rather the widow's daughter Maggie, who was just Pieface's age. Besides Maggie's fondness for Pieface, there was Pieface's liking for Maggie, especially at supper-time when hunting had been slim. Mother Jones regularly rounded up the lanky boy and kept him chopping wood for her while she laundered and patched his clothes. She was big and jolly with an Irish wit, but with a glint in her eye not to be trilled with. So Pie chopped her wood and devoured her delicious pies.

Usually, too, he walked home with Maggie and her mother after an evening's entertainment, for there was sure to be a good feed at the end of the walk. But not so this night. He hid him immediately to his sleeping-quarters, a bare little hole off the office of the livery barn. Here he was permitted to curl up among some horse blankets on a dilapidated cot,

not in remuneration for crawling out at unholy hours to take in horses, but so as to be handy when the nags happened along.

HE lighted a small kerosene lamp which had a chimney so thoroughly smoked that had it been a ham it would have rivaled the Egyptian mummies in lasting qualities, replaced it on the three-cornered shelf high in one corner and fell on his knees beside the cot. In a bundle beneath the cot were all his earthly possessions.

Whenever too pointed references to his inheritance were made in public, he turned to this as a sort of safety-valve. It was the cowboy outfit Lem had given him, possibly hoping that the feel of hairy chaps on his legs, the weight of a belt and gun at his hip and the picturesque flare of a Stetson might fan to life a bit of manliness in him. It almost did.

Upon possessing the outfit, Pieface had actually gone out to the cattle ranges and accepted a job as night-herd. He lasted a part of the first night. Dawn discovered him well up the slope toward the Gulch, his face ghostly white and the brave chaparejos astride his neck. He was a long time recovering; so also were the fun-loving punchers of the Lazy A.

This experience, however, did not dampen Pieface's ardor for his Wild West togs. The feel of them afforded him grim consolation in moments when he desired mightily to go out and shoot up the town.

Meditatively, for the aforesaid idea was fermenting, Pie pulled into the gorgeous chaps, buckled on the belt and gun—which had never felt the weight of a load—knotted the bright kerchief about his lean neck and gave the Stetson a rakish tilt over one eye. Then by the lamplight—the chimney-eclipse not being total—he took down the fragment of an ancient pock-marked mirror, held it over various parts of himself and saw that it was good. The inspection over, he slouched down on the edge of the bunk and stared into space.

Gradually, mistily, across the gray, stained wall opposite, Pie saw again the scenes of the "Midnight Hold-up." Again he saw the barroom, the gang hilariously tanking up, the coming of the

bold two-gun badman who relieved them of all valuables, backed out, hopped his trusty bronc and disappeared far down the trail in a cloud of alkali, the score or more of crack shots who did not dare pull a long breath, much less a trigger, until the dust far down the trail settled back into place.

The gunman had been in need of funds, had loped in and got them—snap!—just like that. The barroom habitués poured themselves into the street in true movie fashion and looked down the empty trail. The omnipresent sheriff with his omnipresent posse with horses eternally saddled for just such emergencies made a spectacular, grand-stand get-away. Then the population, amid much banter, turned back to the bar as if nothing had occurred. No one worried about having his money taken from him; there was plenty more where that had come from.

Reginald de Lancy drew the sleeve of his woolen shirt across his beady forehead. Why, the thing was as easy as rolling off a log. Dramatically he pulled his pockets inside out. Their chronic emptiness was growing all-fired inconvenient, now that he was getting to be a man. Of course it would not always be thus. Some day the stage would come roaring up the Gulch with a wad from his father. Or maybe a movie outfit would happen along, in which case Pieface realized his fortune would be made.

When that time came he would swagger down the street, stopping to eat at every chowshop in town. He'd send to the Ford and get a stogy a foot long and smoke it right under the noses of those men who thought they were so smart. He'd go out on the stage and get him some store clothes, which in the vernacular meant extra smooth lookers, and with his pockets bulging with coin live high the rest of his life.

As for the widow Slocum, there were no words in Pieface's vocabulary to express his private opinion of her. It was no concern of his what his father had done to muddle the widow's life. She it was who first suspected Lem of the hold-up and she wasn't slow in letting it be known. Pieface had no sympathy for her and no spare coin—not if he inherited a million.

He looked forward to coming into some of the dough his father was said to have picked up the day young Slocum bit the dust. All the widow Slocum had to do was to forget the whole business. Anyway, she was doing pretty well with her washtub and truck garden down at the Ford. Pieface had never seen her and hoped he never would. The world was full of men with money sticking out all over their stingy hides. She was as capable as he, Pieface thought, to gather some of it in. More than once he had bumped one for the price of a meal and all he got was profanity. But—there were other ways.

AT the first peep of dawn, Pieface strapped his bundle, tucked it under one long arm and quietly shook the dust of the Gulch from off his hobnails. He headed toward the Ford, making a careful detour out of sight of the stage road. Going was rough through the untrailed hills; besides, he planned as he walked, which impeded progress.

He was quite some distance from the road when about noon a low drone and a cloud of dust indicated that the stage was safely out of reach toward its destination. Pieface sat in the shade of a scrub oak and his heart quickened its beat. He was vaguely uneasy even at this distance. It sifted through his noodle that it would be a lot different if old Scarp drove horses instead of that big, rumbling automobile. But he would have to make the best of conditions. It took an awful lot of nerve to hold up a barroom, and children coming home from school never carried any money. There was nothing for it, then, but to stick up the stage. But there was no hurry. Maybe he'd be feeling stronger next day, anyway.

It was dusk when Pieface reached the valley which feeds the Ford. Twice he put in at ranch-houses and asked for supper and a place to sleep, only to be sniffed at suspiciously by the dogs and waved on toward the Ford by the head of the family. Half a mile from town he came to a shack where there was neither man nor dog, only a woman and some half-grown children. By this time Pieface had a hard-luck story which fetched tears even to his own eyes, so he was taken in, fed and given the first real sym-

pathy he had aroused in many a moon. He assured the family that next time he came he would pay for his accommodations, as the next day a wad of coin was coming his way, though he was vague as to details.

The sun was just beginning to paint the higher crags a deep pink when Pieface awoke with a start, pulled on his boots, slipped out of the lean-to where he had slept and headed for the hills, this time with a definite plan beneath his gray Stetson. Being similar in disposition as well as complexion to the animal that goes without sustenance on occasion and having been fed to repletion the night before, Pieface overlooked breakfast. There never was any telling when the stage driven by Hank Scarp would tear loose from the allurements of the Ford. But when Hank did start, tear loose was the only expression that suited the action.

When the full day flooded the ranges, Pie was far into the hills, heading valiantly for the vantage point he had in mind. He was in full regimentals, having got into his Wild West togs immediately upon clearing the valley. In the crystal-pure mountain air he felt every bit of six feet one way and two hundred pounds t'other of ramping desperado. It almost seemed as if the latent spark was beginning to flicker.

Whether it was the nourishing food of the night before or the kindly consideration the family had given him, Pie, not being analytical, could not have said. To the sweet-faced little woman and the lonely children he had appeared quite a hero. He was extremely susceptible to the opinion people had of him, and he had been the hero all through the hair-raising adventures he related as his own life history. Anyway, he had worked up an impetus and was by way of being a regular gunman out for a haul.

Now through long usage it had become almost the conventional thing, if the Roaring stage was to be held up, to pull the stunt at Dead Men's Forks, just where the road leaves the valley for the foot-hills. There are five different get-aways in as many directions. The safest, though so difficult that only those familiar with the lay of the land ever attempt it, is up the bed of North Fork, over the ridge into Trickle Creek Cañon, up that

and over the divide into a region so wild that there one is as safe as the proverbial needle in a haystack.

Pieface, however, didn't honor the Forks with even a glance as he made his way across the beds of streams which, at this season, were entirely dry. He was beating it straight for Wild Cat Ridge, the highest point between the Ford and the Gulch. There the road curves sharply round a mass of granite, topping the divide in the turn. Inside the curve is a shelving rock partially overhanging the road. This portion of the stage trip is always negotiated gingerly on low.

Here on the ledge Pieface would lie at ease, one hand cupping his chin comfortably, while with the other he twirled his gun in the faces of the startled occupants of the stage. In deep guttural tones he would tell them to drop their coin in the road, then beat it. "And the man what looks back is dead!" Pie had it all doped out. He would have the drop the moment the stage swung around the curve. His body would be shielded by the rocks. It was dead easy and bound to work.

Ever since the night three years back when he had overheard a whispered conversation in Skid's taproom, in which his father urged "Chico Jim" to jump the stage at this spot, Pieface had itched to do it.

"Cracky!" Pie remarked to his shadow running up the slope ahead of him. "Dad was a smart 'un. Nobuddy else ever thought of Wild Cat Ridge!"

What Pie didn't know was that Chico Jim was the only card-sharp around and about who could and did fleece Lem regularly. But Chico understood.

Pie side-tracked to allow the stage to go down to the Ford, giving it a wide berth and keeping out of sight of the road till the last rumble had died away. By noon he was spread full length on the exact spot he had decided upon, gun in hand and bandanna pulled well up to his eyes. The stage would wait for the twelve-forty flyer, which as likely as not would be late. But a fellow could never tell.

PIE got all set and waited—and waited—and waited. The pink granite boulders caught the rays of the midday sun,

intensified and threw them back, and Pie, in his heavy, furry chaps, sizzled. The unusual hike up the warm slope had drained him of all moisture even before the sun got in its effective work. He became poignantly aware of a great aching void just beneath his belt buckle and only the good Lord knew how thirsty he was. Pert little chipmunks frisked within a few feet of him and an occasional lizard shot across the rock where he lay. He wondered they had not long ago died of thirst. An inquisitive camp-bird, as blue of wing as the sky above, made a stop-over on a near-by twig and screamed down a noisy inquiry.

"Shet up, you pesky lil' buzzard you! Want ev'rybuddy in the county t' know I'm here?" Pieface hissed, waving an arm wildly and incidentally sucking in half a yard of kerchief.

Feeling disturbed, he climbed a boulder to peep down the road to where it appeared an instant half a mile below. His eye was caught by the gleam of the river, a silvery ribbon far, far away, and the sight made his tongue hang out.

A vagrant breeze curved up over the rock where he lay, bringing a sound that sent a tingle through him like a shot. Unmistakably it was the *chug* of an auto coming up the grade. Pieface flattened to the rock, for all the world as he'd seen the little lizards do when startled. His hide turned to goose-flesh and his heart drifted off from its usual moorings and thumped like mad right up between his outstanding ears. If you have ever hopped off into several thousand feet of air and wondered whether your parachute would open, you know how Pieface felt.

Pieface had seen a tenderfoot roll over dead with apoplexy in an exciting moment. It had been a horrible sight. He wondered if the frightful sensations shooting through him were symptoms of the same dread trouble. Convinced he was either about to burst outright or fall over in a purple fit, he lost all track, for a few precious moments, of time and events. It was buck fever, pure and simple, and he'd had it before, but never an attack of such virulence.

Then like a bolt from the blue came a great roaring noise, accompanied by a

pop-pop-pop like that of a gun, and a great dark form which in a veil of dust strongly resembled the dragon of St. George shot suddenly around the curve and hurled itself savagely at the waiting bandit. The madly careening thing all but scraped him off the ledge as it flashed by. Never before had the big stage come up the grade scrambling with such speed as on this eventful occasion.

So long had Pieface rested, at times half dozing, on the rock, telling himself how easy it would be, that he had become convinced it would be a regular walk-away. It might have been if he had been prepared for exactly what happened and if he had taken into consideration how difficult it is for a man to meet an emergency squarely and courageously while lying flat on his stomach, especially for one who habitually took to his heels in tight squeezes.

The thing had been too sudden, anyway. The unexpected vision, that popped right out of nowhere and catapulted itself directly at him, swept him completely off his feet, or rather his stomach. As the big noise slithered along the ledge within six inches of his nose, which for once forgot to be inquisitive, Pieface flew up like a terrified cat into whose lap a puppy had been dropped, yelled "Scatch-yuh-brute!" and scuttled backward into the shelter of the rocks.

For a number of whirling seconds he sat panting laboriously and piecing together his scattered senses. Tears mingled with perspiration and washed their way down his dust-smeared face. Then very, very cautiously he crept up the rocks and, rubbing the mud from his sight, peered down at the road where it showed at the curves.

Old Nick himself, Pieface thought, must be at that wheel. Surely no mortal man, not even that devil Hank Scarp, could take the ridge at that speed and survive. Yet there was the stage far down the west slope and going strong, leaving the bold highwayman high and dry, his plans all caved in.

Pieface crawled dejectedly into the shade of a gnarled little old piñon that grew nonchalantly from solid granite and crooned softly to itself on the edge of the rim-rock. The vast stretch of the peacefully slumbering hills and the cool-

ing breezes coming from the mesas diverted and refreshed him, and in no time at all Pieface came to.

He lifted his head, and the lines of his usually slack lips tightened. For the first time in his life he took stock of himself and was disgusted with the whole works. His bump of hope sagged till it became a mere dent. But there is this compensation for hope that is gone: With it goes fear, and absence of fear is worth more than much gold. But only the wise old philosophers know that.

PIEFACE turned his back squarely upon the stage road and headed north into a wild, uninhabited region, neither knowing nor caring where he was going. For some hours he slid with brisk accompaniments of loose rocks into gulches and crawled out over rugged brinks in a vain attempt to get away from that within himself which caused him to quiver like a woman when he wished with all his soul to be calm and brave like the sturdy men he knew.

The sun was still high when he gravitated down into a deep cañon and came upon a stream. He was in a fair way to drinking it dry when he noticed the fresh print of a boot in the mud beneath his mouth. He lay on his stomach and between gulps pondered the why and wherefore of the prints, for there were others pointing up-stream. Like Sheriff Conner's bloodhounds he had once seen at work, Pie was always more or less on a scent. Being by nature curious, it was but natural that he should now take up the trail of the strange tracks.

He had not gone far when the flip of a minnow in a pool gave him a clue. The tracks were probably those of some tenderfeet out from town whipping up the stream for trout. Several years in the West had not been sufficient to teach Pieface why men sometimes consider it expedient to wade water when a perfectly dry, smooth trail is handy and much easier.

Tenderfeet! Fellows from the East in store clothes—maybe with money to hire a guide—and a heavy lunch basket—possibly a cold bottle or two. Why did tenderfeet bring money into the hills as if they expected to buy commodities among the boulders? Money. . . .

Suddenly Pieface halted and looked into space. A vacuous grin crinkled across his thin, sallow face and he fetched a long breath of relief.

Tryin' to stick up old Hank was one risky, fool idea! Now these here tenderfeet. . . .

Very carefully he rearranged his mask and began a cautious pussy-footing upstream.

Coming to falls, he detoured and climbed into a level glade filled with a dense new growth of trees. Across their waving tops appeared an old log cabin. Pie recognized the spot. It was the abandoned site of a sawmill on Trickle Creek. Once upon a time he had driven over for a load of squared timbers. There had never been a mill-house, as the sawing had been done in the open. The cabin had been the bunk-house.

Silently and with extreme caution Pie wormed his way up to the back of the cabin, and where the adobe chinking had fallen away obtained a fairly good view of the dim interior. Two men sat on log stools, a cracker-box between their knees, silently playing cards. They were light of build and wore store clothes, even to white shirts. Their coats lay piled on a box near the open door, as if shed carelessly after a long, warm hike.

Tenderfeet as sure as he lived, Pie decided, and licked his lips. Easy ones too—not a gun in sight. After a long while the smaller one spoke in a low tone, which because of the noise of the trees whipping against the cabin in the stiff breeze Pieface could scarcely catch.

"Say, Gus, watcher say to playin' for the roll?" jerking a thumb toward the coats.

"Not by a — sight," the older man replied coolly, his eyes on his hand. "We'd only wind up by murdering each other. Besides, as I've told you before, that lil' ole roll is goin' to stay in one piece till we meet up with Chico Jim and the hosses. A lot o' good the coin'd do us without 'em. We don't know the way over this — divide any more'n a rabbit, and we're both plum' tuckered out right now."

"Reckon you're right, pard," replied the other, throwing in his ante. "Bout

time Chico's showin' up, too." Then, "Gawd! Supposin' he don't come, huh?"

"Forget it! He'll come. Your deal."

The dark face of the older man spread and he chuckled gleefully.

"E'gawd! It sure tickles me when I think of what tenderfeet straight from the East old Hank had aboard his old bus this mornin'. Hank was bent on showin' 'em some driving, too. Well, I bet he drove some after we lightened his load for him. He sure burned her up gettin' to Conner to tip him off to run the ties for those poor city guys! Mebbe sent out a relief squad by now to keep 'em from starvin'."

After the shuffle he added:

"Poor old Hank! But think of that — old fool sendin' it in there to be spent foolishly!"

"Yeah," drawled the other and spat in disgust. "An' we his pals like we was. An' most of it a-comin' outer our share of the swag, too! By —! I'll allers think he run a cold deck in on us to git it, I'm a-tellin' you. But now he's where we can't fix him for it. An' t' — with his brat."

THE men quit talking and Pie lay still and tried to think. Not being quick at that and rather hazy with numbers—for always when Pie put two and two together he got three—the real gist of the conversation escaped him. Often enough he had got hold of an extra bit of juicy gossip only to miss its purport until he had passed it on verbatim to another.

In the present situation Pieface could see nothing intricate. These men had left town with Hank, had quit the stage and come up to the mill-site. They had a lot of money along, perhaps to pay. . . . Did they say Chico Jim? Why, yes, Chico used to guide tenderfeet through the back country hunting deer and bear—charged high, too. Surely these fellows were city guys, talking in ladylike tones and afraid to play for a real stake. Pieface had suffered mightily as a tenderfoot. Well, dang a tenderfoot, anyway!

With the dismal failure of the morning, a stomach so empty it ached and the sight of these fool tenderfeet acting careless-like with a wad of unprotected

coin, Pieface felt as uneasy as a bear with a sore head. With the velvet noiselessness of the wily one that whispered of apples in the long ago, he oozed around the corner of the cabin and got to his feet, gun in hand.

The next thing he knew he was inside the door and had the men covered. Quicker than a wink the two were on their feet reaching for the rafters. This made it unnecessary for Pieface to utter a word, which was lucky for Pie.

Out of the tail of his left eye Pie's gaze slanted down to the coats, the roll and—his blood froze—two heavy belts carrying men's size six-shooters.

Too late Pie saw his awful mistake. The eyes glinting out between the neckerchief and the Stetson turned again to the men, and the look in those eyes was almighty desperate. Neither of the men moved a hair. The big gun they faced was businesslike and uncannily steady. How were they to know that it was the rigidity of sheer, abject terror?

The roll now meant about one hundred degrees less than zero to the bold gunman and gladly would he have dropped the whole business, but—those guns!

Slowly and mechanically, his mental processes congealed by fright, Pieface reached down with his left hand, his eyes and gun on the men, slipped his arm beneath coats, belts, guns and all, and backed out. Hugging the bundle to his ribs, he backed into the brush, turned and fled for dear life.

HE rolled and tobogganed down precipitous slopes and fought his way headlong, gasping for breath, through brambly thickets and boulders strewn about purposely to get into a fellow's way. His heavy gun, thrust hastily into his shirt, jolted down one trouser leg and hung up on the top of his boot. It interfered a lot with his gait, causing him to go rollicking through the sagebrush like a veteran side-wheeler trying to lope.

At every jump he gathered unto himself additional scratches and bruises, but in spite of everything he was making magnificent progress. That, just then, was his main ambition. He was drifting with all possible speed back to the valley—nothing else mattered.

There came then, from beyond a knoll just ahead, the long-drawn, throaty bay of hounds. Conner's hounds! Instantly Pieface's hair stiffened. Still on high, he swerved on one wheel to the edge of a gully and precipitated himself on the seat of his pants to its sheltering depths. There he sat, trying in vain to stifle his loud breathing, for with that and the booming of his heart he was scared to death, believing he made as much noise as a stalled locomotive.

He felt he was a goner if Conner was out. He was. From behind a sagebush on the edge of the bank, Pieface watched a bunch of mounted men come trailing around the bend, led by the sheriff and his dogs. A posse! And after him! Pieface's eyes bugged out like automobile lights.

Spinelessly Pieface slid back into the gully. The accusing bundle burned his ribs and he shoved it from him. As it turned over he noticed with relief that both guns had fallen out of the swinging holsters. He had his mother's innate horror of a loaded gun. Try as he would, the nearest he could come to getting chummy with the Westerner's pet was to handle it empty. Many a marauding expedition he'd gone on through the near-by hills with nary a cartridge.

A gouge in the leg reminded him of the S. & W. in his trousers. He fished it out. And right here Reginald de Lancy got the real scare of his life, for just as he grasped the cold steel he remembered.

If there is one thing on earth that Western men enjoy more than catching a tenderfoot or a weakling who has tried to get gay with them with his gun empty, it is not on record. Had those two desperados up the cañon but known!

Pieface had been scared enough for hours to faint but hadn't the time to give to it. Now he took the time. In this, the gods who protect such as he were kind. When the men who rode in circles near-by drew nearer, Pie in his panic must surely have scuttled forth and exposed himself, had he been conscious.

This danger was past when finally he sat up and wondered where he'd been for a week back. He'd awakened to a world of deepening shadows and a tomb-like stillness. His eye lit on the piled coats. There was a pocket securely

closed with safety-pins. It aroused Pieface's curiosity and he investigated. A moment and the almost forgotten wad of money lay in his hand. It was a flat package and not very thick. That the bills were all of high denomination he could see through one torn corner; also he saw that there was a letter included.

It was a pile of money, all right, but it failed to interest him. When a fellow's precious life swings on a hair, what use has he for riches? Even though the posse never caught him, how could he spend a whole barrel of coin without being suspected? He hadn't thought of that before. Its possession would send him to the dreaded rock-pits of Cañon City for life! Well, he'd get shed of the stuff, *pronto!* But how? He dare not bury it, for the hounds, when they came down on his trail, would nose it out. Thirst recalled the river. He'd tie it in with rocks as he'd done kittens and drop it into deep water, then let those old hounds try to smell it out!

Pieface waddled up the coats and pitched them as far as he could up a side gully, then he headed for the valley which was close at hand. A vast interior vacuum reminded him of the woman who had fed him the night before. Through alfalfa fields and tall grasses flanking the irrigating ditches, he made his way unseen to her door. With a resigned and patient smile she bade him enter and, without a word, set about getting him something to eat. Pieface watched her ravenously. The children, occupied with their lessons at the kitchen table, threw him curious glances but said nothing.

Considering the very apparent poverty of the little family, it was a shame the way Pie stowed away the food. When he had licked up the last drop of gravy with a swab of soft home-made bread, he looked up at the wondering family and opened his face.

Didn't he tell 'em he'd have money next time he showed up? They couldn't guess how he got it. Well, he'd been paid off by the cattleman he'd been riding for. Two or three miles from town five men had jumped him for his wad, shot his horse and chased him miles and miles before he gave them the slip. Unless he separated himself from the

money he possessed, he faced an immediate and horrible death. Abject fear quavered through the youth's voice. The truth seemed to be there and all recognized he was in a mighty bad way.

"That's just the way it goes in this old world," said the little girl, petulantly, shoving her arithmetic away. "You have a whole lot of money and don't want it. We who need it awfully don't ever have any." Then, brightening, "Say, mother, if we had it, wouldn't we just tear up the old railroad going back to grandma and grandpa?"

"I just reckon we would, dearie," smiled the woman over her ironing.

"Aw, you just wait till I get big and strong and can go on a round-up or something," exclaimed the boy; "then I guess we'll fan it for back home. Won't we, mom?"

"You wanna be a cowman?" Pieface asked.

He unstrapped and shoved his cowboy outfit into the hands of the delighted boy.

"An' what is more," he added rapidly, "if you-all will take this wad, it is yores. I was jes' a-goin' t'drown it, anyway. But you'll have t' git right outer the country t'oncet an' say nuthin, for if ever them ole crow-baits what chased me found you had it—good-night!"

Pie fished the package out and held it out to the woman. She gravely shook her head, even while her eyes yearned for it.

Pie sat, his arm outstretched, and stared. He didn't know before that any one ever refused to take money.

So the woman explained. She put her best into her words, partly to brace herself, for she was in desperate need of funds. Then, too, she suspected the boy had not come by it honestly, but Pie couldn't seem to get the drift of it all, so she compromised by offering to keep the package over night for him, and let him have the cot in the lean-to again.

IF ever Pieface slept, he did that night. When he finally came back to earth, the sun slanted in through the little west window. With considerable difficulty he got his stiffened legs over the edge of the cot and reached hazily for his boots. He was hungry as a wolf but otherwise

in fine fettle. He paraded through the room which answered as kitchen and living-room, and stepped to the door. Bees hummed through a bed of many-colored pansies beside the path to the gate, just outside of which could be heard the musical tinkle of water racing through the ditch. Half a mile away the roofs of the Ford rippled beneath the midday sun.

The Ford! Why, of course. That was where he was going to spend his money! Pie turned impatiently toward the inner room. Where was everybody, anyway? The place was very quiet. Pieface was reminded of breakfast, and there on the table it awaited him. One whole loaf of bread wrapped in a cloth, a hunk of butter in an earthen jar, cold meat and jam, buttered beets and, on the stove ready to be warmed, a pot of coffee. Pieface took it cold. He took everything else in sight and ate till his eyes grew dull.

As he feasted, he adventured all over the Ford in a brand-new suit, the pockets bulging with coin, put up at the best hotel, smoked, drank and was merry. The idea of parting with the roll of money had disappeared with the craven shadows of the night. Here he was safe and sound, and the posse probably still up Trickle Creek Cañon.

He must have been crazy last night to wish to separate himself from all that coin. Not much! He'd wait till the woman came in and then he'd just tell her he'd relieve her of that wad now. Then he'd beat it.

Never again would he frame curtains for a lot of lazy dames. Of course he'd still let the widow Jones do his washing, now he could pay her in cash. No more wood chopping for Reginald de Lancy. He would buy Maggie a necklace as soon as he got his new suit. Sundays he'd have her and her mother come to the Ford to enjoy a bit of high life with him, but as for the rest of the Gulch, he wished the mine beneath it would open up and swallow the whole place.

He stretched his legs luxuriantly and let his gaze wander carelessly among the confusion of dishes, papers, odds and ends scattered over the big kitchen table at which he sat. Then he saw an envelope. It lay on one corner of the cloth,

held down by the vinegar cruet. Pie turned it over and saw it was addressed to himself. There were two enclosures. A greenback peeped out of one and, naturally, he opened that one first. It ran:

REGINALD CHILDERS:

When you read this we shall be on our way home. We intend to go on the train that comes through here at four tomorrow morning. You are welcome to all we leave, which, Heaven knows, is little. If you will stay by the garden, keep it watered and worked, people will come and buy vegetables, and if you had a woman who could do washing, there is plenty to be had. It was too much for my strength. You will see a notice pinned to the door, telling us either to pay up or vacate. I couldn't keep up the rent and have a doctor for my son too. I will mail the back rent to Mr. Wells. I enclose a bill with this and am asking you to deliver the basket of ironed clothes to Mrs. Brady of the Brady Grocery Store on Main Street. That will square me with every one here. Reginald, I have prayed for this money, and while it is but a small part of what we had taken from us, it will take us home and get a good surgeon for Tommy. Now, be a good boy and go to work.

Best wishes,
MRS. ELIZABETH SLOCUM.

P.S. I am positive you were not telling me the truth, I investigated the package. The moment I read the letter enclosed, I knew the money was mine.

As Pie read the other letter his chin sagged lower and lower and his eyes grew lighter as a pallor crept into his face. At first he refused to believe it. Then the horrible truth dribbled through him like icy water. He buried his head in his arms, kicked the rungs of the chair and blubbered. Then suddenly he whirled the chair from under, flopped into a rocker and rocked his frenzied way clear across the bare floor, letting out an agonized yelp at each lurch.

"Ow! Ow!" he howled. "That danged slippery old widow! She done went an' got it after all! I hope she chokes—so I do! Dad was right! A feller'd be all right if he didn't weaken! If he didn't weaken! Ow! An' now I s'pose I'll have to work her ole garden—ow! The danged ole sneak—ow!"

The epistle which put the finishing touch to the thunderbolt hastily scrawled by Elizabeth Slocum was, in Lem's handwriting. It said:

SON REGS:

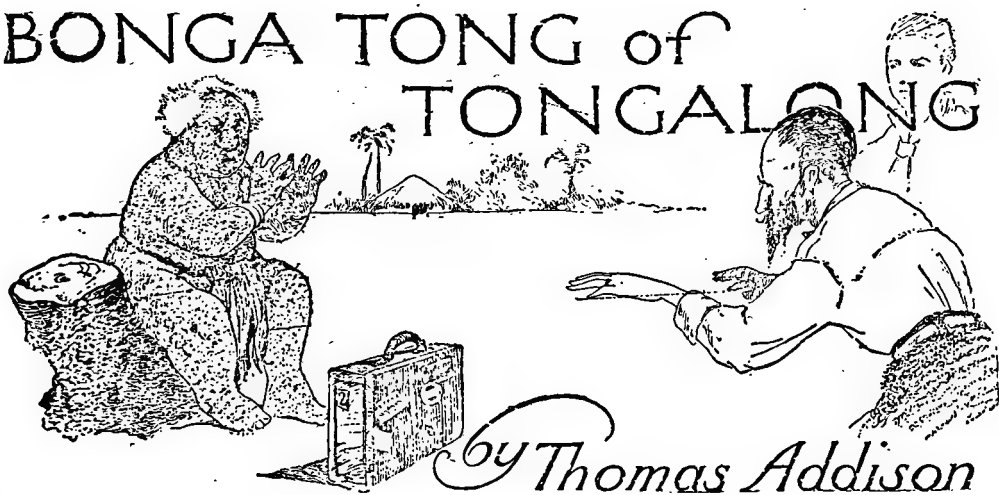
They tell me I'm about to cash my last chips. You pore fish, you don't deserve a red but you might as well spend what's left. Budd Lane will fetch it in to you and I want for you to let Skidmore bank it for you. Now, kid, I want for you to take a brace and be a man. A regular he-man with plenty of guts allers has what he wants, but for God's sake don't weaken! And don't get mushy over them Slocums. We don't owe them nothing. I

located that claim long 'fore Tom Slocum did, but didn't have no papers on it, and I never meant to hurt him getting it. I was sorry about that but some—fish die too easy anyhow. Now you take this wad I'm sending and live honest. A pore, cracked-brain loco like you has to work, so go to it. I'm sorry for lots I did now, but don't you be.

Yore dad,

LEMUEL CHILDERS.

BONGA TONG of TONGALONG



By Thomas Addison

Author of "For The Flag," "G-2, Defective," etc.

MARMADUKE WELCH, vice-president of the Transcendental Film Company, had not forgotten his humble beginnings. Indeed, he found pleasure in recalling them, and this proved that the tumultuous stars in their courses—speaking cinematically—had failed to distort his sense of proportion and that yet greater psychic perception, his sense of humor.

He sat now tilted back in his office-chair, high above the madding street, a man of fifty, short, stout and demonstratively bald. He was dressed expensively; that is to say, on his radiant tie he wore a gem that was worth a small fortune; for the rest, he was appareled like any other picture magnate to whom money is as dross in the crucible.

Welch was reminiscing to an intimate who had dropped in on him after lunch.

A cigar was tucked askew in his mouth, and his eyes, pale blue and prominent, roved over the ruffled reaches of the river as he talked. His voice was lazy and self-relishable.

"It was in 'Frisco, in May of ninety-six, the time I'm telling about. 'Hicky Jones' was just off the Honolulu boat when I ran across him and he gave me the tip.

"'Duke,' he said, 'they're perishing for a show over there, but nothing doing in drama, you understand. They wouldn't get it. What they're pining for is a variety bill—most anything that can do a clog, throw a handspring and pull rabbits out of a hat. You got to appeal to those simple children of nature through the eye, not the ear.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'but how about getting time?'

"'Time!' Hicky stared at me and

laughed. 'There are no theaters, sonny. It's a top you need, not house share to cut into your takings—you get it all. And you can play a month through the Islands, easy.'

"Well, it sounded good to me. I had a few thousand planted and I knew where I could get a pony circus-top down in Los Angeles, old but weather-proof. I started out and combed the coast for acts. They were closing right along. It was in May, as I said, and I managed to book five pretty fair ones for little or nothing.

"I can remember those acts as if it were yesterday. I ought to, considering all we went through with Bonga Tong, the cannibal king, down in the South Pacific after we left Hawaii. But I'm breaking in on my continuity.

"Let me see: I had young Leclair, King of Conjurers, for my head-liner. He was dark and dandified, with a little black mustache, and French only in name. His sister, Rosalie, was his helper, a nice brown-haired little girl we all warmed up to, though she didn't play any favorites, not with us. Leclair had the goods all right and made a noise in the big time some years later.

"Then there was Sangarelli, Master Mesmerist and Ventriloquist. He just naturally looked like *Svengali*—*Trilby* was going strong then—and mighty proud he was of it. He had a 'subject' that he dropped when he left the Islands, saying he'd pick up another in Auckland—but there I go again with a cut-in out of place.

"The others of the company were Hobbs and Hovey, black-face dance team; Lynn Brothers in a high balancing act; and Clarice and Corinne, sister contortionists and knife-throwers. You never would have cried over their beauty but they were good, straight, sensible girls. I got a rate on the old *Katonah*, and we landed, full of ginger, in Honolulu seven days later.

"Well, Hicky Jones had handed me the right card and I made some money, but it's not about our tour of the Islands I'm going to tell you; it's what it led to.

"We were playing a week's return date in Honolulu while waiting for the boat home. Friday night, after the show, I met an Englishman who told me we

ought to make a hit down New Zealand way, then over to Australia. He told me of a four-thousand-ton steam freighter, the *Claudia*, that was leaving Sunday for Auckland, on which we could get passage at half the rates of the robber mail-boats. It would take longer, of course, but look at the money we'd save!

"I was swelled up with the luck we'd had so far and I listened to that man. Then I put it to the company. They were all young except Sangarelli, who was forty, but a good sport at that, and they jumped at it. A life on the ocean wave, nothing to do but shave for three weeks and half-pay running on with every tick of the clock appealed to them. So, on Sunday morning, we lined the rail of the *Claudia* and threw a farewell kiss to 'Lulu.'

"I'm not going to expand on the details of that boat trip except to say that we had a supercargo aboard, a strapping, blond young fellow who, from the start, took a shine to Rosalie and didn't seem to suffer any tempestuous rebuke for it on her part. It got so pretty soon that if, after dark, there was any retired spot on the deck of that old tin teapot where you'd like to be alone with your sacred thoughts, Rosalie and Hugh Rodney were there beforehand. But this isn't a love story so I won't go further into that.

"On Monday of the second week we crossed the line. Whether that had anything to do with it I don't know—I'm no sailor—but things began to happen. Tuesday morning, when the steward went to call the captain, he found him dead in his berth. Heart-disease, First Mate Bailey called it and took charge. Then, that night, we ran into a storm area, though nothing of the sort was due at that time of year, they said. It blew harder and harder till on Wednesday we were bucking into a howling hurricane. Along toward night of Thursday the wind began to fall, and, just as we were thanking our lucky stars that the worst was over, the propeller-shaft snapped in two, and there we were, rolling helplessly like a dead whale in the trough of the sea.

"Mind you, all this time we passengers were kept below deck, as merry a little

company as ever assembled for a funeral in the next room.

"To cut it short; we banged up on a coral reef that night and stuck there. Hugh Rodney reported to us that, as Bailey hadn't got an observation in forty-eight hours, he didn't know where we were and now he could never tell, for the chart-house had been swept away and his sextant with it. Two of our four boats were smashed, and the second mate and nine Kanakas—the crew was made up largely of that breed—had been washed overboard. To cap this comforting news, the *Claudia* was breaking her back on the reef and might part at any minute.

"But the old tub didn't do it. She held together somehow, and we all went up on deck when light came. The wind had died to a stiff breeze from the west, but the surf ran high. Over to the east we could see from the bridge a dark spot on the water that Bailey gave out was an island. We'd make a try for it when the wind went down a bit, he said.

"Well, we hung on there all that day and night with a reception committee of tiger sharks waiting outside the reef to welcome any little stranger who should come their way. The sea kept going down, and Saturday morning at day-break Bailey decided to launch the boats. Of officers, passengers and crew, there were in all twenty-eight of us left. Bailey told off the first and second engineers, Hobbs and Hovey, the Lynn Brothers and eight of the crew to one boat; the rest of us, including six Kanakas, were assigned to the other. Both had a small sail.

"The chief engineer's boat was sent away first. From the bridge Bailey had marked with his eye a narrow passage to clear water, and he stood there bawling directions to the chief. They were almost through when a huge roller, like the last sob of the dying storm, came roaring in over the reef. It caught the boat, lifted it high and smashed it to flinders on the rocks. The undertow sucked men and wreck out into the open, and the sharks—well, there were times long afterward when I'd wake up in the night crying out with the horror of that scene.

"Bailey waited until we'd calmed down

some; then he had his boat lowered. He wanted to get away before the breeze failed. The island, he calculated, was ten or twelve miles distant, and we could make it, he thought, before the sun was high. We got the girls over the side first, Corinne with a flat leather bag strapped to her waist. It contained her knives, though why she clung to them she didn't know herself, I guess. Leclaire was nowhere to be seen and we set up a shout for him. He came up the companion stairs carrying a suitcase, and Bailey let out a roar.

"What d'ye think you're going to—a hotel?" he demanded. "If you save your hide you'll be lucky."

"I've got a few tricks in here that may amuse the natives, if there are any," said Leclaire quietly. "But, if you insist, I'll leave it behind."

"It looked to me like a bit of ill-timed bravado, but Bailey seemed to take it otherwise. He called to the men in the boat and himself dropped the grip down to them. We were all in, finally, and put off from the ship. Bailey steered into open water without mishap, though, as we pulled through the passage, my hair nearly lifted my hat off my head.

"Well, we made the island all right. It was long and low with jungle coming down to a narrow strip of sand. A coral barrier guarded it, with the usual sharks playing around outside, but we found a way in at last, and beached the boat. Bailey ordered the Kanakas to take out the water and stores; then he motioned us—that is, Leclaire, Rodney, Sangarelli and me—to one side out of hearing of the girls. Leclaire was hanging to his grip, I noticed.

"I've got a .45 on me," Bailey said, "and Rodney has the mate to it. How about you fellows?"

"I told him I packed a .32. Leclaire confessed that he hadn't a gun, and as for Sangarelli, he remarked with a grand air:

"I don't need a pistol. My eye is my sword."

"It was mixing metaphors a bit, but we didn't stop to argue it with him. Bailey said:

"We don't know what is on this chunk o' dirt, but if there are any wild men we mustn't go to shooting unless

it's life or death. Leclaire can show 'em a few of those tricks of his first. Maybe they'll think he's a witch-doctor and it will throw a scare——'

"He never finished. Something whizzed out of the jungle and poor Bailey went down with a spear through his throat. The same instant a horde of savages pounced on us. It all happened so quickly that we didn't have a chance to get our guns out. I heard an agonized scream from the girls, saw Hugh Rodney hurl a black devil to the ground in an effort to reach Rosalie, and go pitching down himself. Then I too went down and out from a crack on the head with a club.

"WHEN I came to I was lying trussed up like a bale of hay on the floor of a filthy palm-thatched hut. Leclaire, Rodney and Sangarelli were lying near me. They had been mauled considerably, but fortunately we had no broken bones among us.

"The door of the hut looked out on a sort of public square, which was dotted with coconut palms and was perhaps a hundred yards long and nearly as wide, with huts like ours scattered around the sides of it. At the farther end, to the south, a big palaver was in progress among the natives, punctuated by a chorus of high, discordant notes produced on conch shells by lusty-lunged trumpeters. The occasion accounted, presumably, for our being left to ourselves for the time being.

"Where are the girls?' I asked when I'd got my wits together. Rodney answered:

"Nobody knows! Dear God, nobody knows!' he repeated with a groan. 'We didn't have a chance to help, and those cowardly Kanakas put off in the boat. I hope to heaven the sharks have got them!'

"Bailey's done for,' said Sangarelli. 'There's only the seven of us left.'

"Leclaire didn't open his mouth. He was working at the grass rope that bound his hands behind him, twisting and turning, heaving and pulling, never letting up for a second. This wasn't one of his cabinet tricks; it was a sure enough job he was tackling, but his stage stunt helped, I guess, for presently he gave a

long satisfied grunt and sat up. His hands were free.

"In a few minutes we were all rid of our fetters and were chafing our legs and arms to start the blood circulating. The savages had not gone through our clothes—deferring that, probably, until they should finish their pow-wow—and Rodney and I were in possession of our guns and several rounds of cartridges each. Leclaire looked about him and found a cavity under the eaves of the hut. He gathered up the ropes and stuffed them in it out of sight.

"Perhaps,' he said, 'they'll think it's magic we've worked. Now,' he added grimly, 'I'm going out to find my sister.'

"We are with you,' I told him. 'But go slow, Leclaire. Don't try to rush things.'

"I won't,' he promised, 'and you fellows keep those guns under cover. We will see first what we can do without them.'

"We walked out of the hut and started, four abreast, toward the caucus at the end of the square. We were pretty nearly half-way across before we were noticed. A yell went up and then died quaveringly away. The conches stopped and a dead silence ensued. Leclaire had guessed right. They thought it was some magic art that had loosed our bonds.

"We marched steadily on and, as we drew near, the crowd fell back on each side and disclosed an enormous black creature seated in the crotch of a huge tree that had been hacked off above and below, and the butt planted firmly in the ground. It was intended for a throne, I suppose. Anyway, the man seated on it was Bonga Tong, as we learned later, supreme chief of Tongalong, as the island was called. His short, crisp hair was bleached a pale yellow and stood up like a halo about his head. He was stark-naked except for a breech-clout of plaited grass which, for that matter, all the men wore. The women were habited in girdles of pliant leaves.

"We halted at some fifteen yards from this fearsome person. He sat motionless, staring at us unwinkingly. A bone ring was in his nose, and on his scarred, broad breast lay a long necklace of small, vaguely familiar objects that at the mo-

ment I couldn't place, for, to tell the truth, I was scared stiff by the sight of that great ebony sphinx in the tree crotch.

"There's your grip, Leclair,' said Sangarelli under his breath. He was the least perturbed of the lot of us. His coal-black eyes were glued on Bonga Tong's face with the intensity of a basilisk.

"It was the grip. It lay at the potentate's feet unharmed.

"They are afraid to open it,' whispered Leclair. 'Make it talk, Sangy.'

THE ventriloquist stepped out a pace, his gaze never leaving Bonga Tong. There was not a sound from the crowd. They were still transfixed with wonder at these four men whom they had seen wrapped in ropes tied and knotted, and who were now at large.

"O great black ass,' intoned Sangarelli, 'listen to me. I am your master. You are my slave. You shall do my bidding as such. Not now, it may be, but soon—soon—when my will is lord of yours.'

"The veriest nonsense, it seemed to us, knowing that the Tongalongan could not understand a word that was said, but, for the first time since we had stood before him, Bonga Tong blinked his small, pig eyes and moved slightly.

"Aha, I have him coming!' exclaimed Sangarelli.

"Cut out the spellbinding, you boob. Get busy with the grip!' urged Leclair impatiently.

"Sangarelli shrugged and stepped forward another pace. His long skinny fingers, bunched together like a serpent's head, shot out at the suitcase—once, twice and again. From within it, apparently, issued a succession of catcalls—and there had never been a cat on the island—that ended with the blood-curdling shriek of a human voice.

"S-s-h!' said Sangarelli, and the noise was stilled.

"This last was something even primitive man could comprehend. A murmur ran through that pack of negroes and they fell away from us still farther. Bonga Tong was left almost alone.

"Instead of following up this advantage, however, Sangarelli seemed deter-

mined to try his mesmeric powers. He strode to within twenty feet of the throne, his eyes boring into the chief's.

"If I could speak your — lingo, you son of Erebus, I'd get you sure,' he declaimed. 'And I may do it yet. Come down out of that and follow me!'

"I could see that Bonga Tong stirred uneasily, as might any one with those burning eyes fixed on him and that sonorous voice speaking an unknown tongue. But Leclair's impatience grew.

"Oh, bosh!' he muttered and left Rodney and me and went forward. He paused a short way from Sangarelli, his head thrown back, his arms held high. The silence was broken only by the rustling of the giant palm that canopied the throne.

"Ro-sa-lie! Ro-sa-lie! Where are you?' cried Leclair with all his strength.

"There was a certain solemnity in the moment. The dramatic pose of the man, the hushed throng of mystified islanders, the throbbing voice questing response—it was like an invocation to the unseen powers of the air. For somewhere far back of Bonga Tong came an answer, faint but distinct.

"Here, Robert, here! Come to me!'

"With the first word, the conjuror leaped upward lightly and between the thumb and finger of his right hand shone a bright silver disk. The effect on those untutored savages was as if the message had been transmuted on the way into corporeal form and substance.

"Are you safe, Rosalie?' cried Leclair again.

"Yes, for the present,' was the reply.

"In the conjuror's left hand a silver disk was seen.

"Courage, we will find you!' he shouted back.

"Leclair had moved a little forward all the while until now he stood in line with Sangarelli before the throne, still with a silver half-dollar—for that's what it was—held high in each hand. He made a sweeping pass and tossed, as it seemed, the coins into the air; then he snatched off his hat and held it out expectantly.

"Look up with me and say something, Sangy!' he hissed from the corner of his mouth.

"You broke my control, confound

you! I had him coming,' sounded a voice overhead.

"A coin bounced into sight from the hat.

"'Again!' said Leclaire. 'Anything.'

"'Ha, ha, ha! Ah—ha, ha, ha!' came the voice.

"There was the jingle of silver in the hat, and two coins bounced into sight. Leclaire advanced impressively to Bonga Tong and tendered him the coins. The great bulk of black flesh shrank back and a frightened squeal came from it. Here was a gift from a devil-god, perhaps, and Bonga Tong would have none of it.

"But Leclaire didn't have possession of his suitcase yet. To pick it up tamely and walk off would involve an anti-climax charged with danger. You may be able to face a lion for a while, but turn your back and you'll feel his claws. I wondered what the magician would do next.

"Talk about manufactured coincidences in books and plays, they're not deuce high to what happens now and then in real life. If you can beat what I'm going to tell, I'd like to know it. The thing pretty nearly routed all of us, even Leclaire, who, however, recognized the cause after the first startled moment.

"From the depths of that grip lying at the feet of the king pealed the shrill, incessant clamor of a bell. It stopped and went on, stopped and went on. When finally the noise ceased, we four stood alone in the square. Bonga Tong and his liege subjects had taken hot-foot to the woods.

"'By Jove!' exclaimed Leclaire, 'I must have wound that clock up and put it in my grip last night without thinking. It was set for eleven, the time when I used to get up in Hawaii.'

"A SHOUT broke from Hugh Rodney and he started off like a deer. Leclaire was instantly at his heels.

"'Look!' I said to Sangarelli and pointed beyond the throne.

"Running toward us were the girls, Rosalie in the lead. Hugh reached her first and, quite unabashed, threw his arms around her and held her close. She didn't struggle, just nestled there and held out a hand to her brother when he came up. Sangarelli turned to me.

"'Duke,' he said, 'did you notice the necklace that old cock bird wore?'

"I told him that I did but couldn't make out what it was composed of. I was farther away than he.

"'They were human incisor teeth,' stated the mesmerist gravely.

"It gave me a shock and I cried out:

"'Why, so they were! Great heavens, they are cannibals, these people!'

"'It looks like it,' Sangarelli answered. 'And, Duke, one of those teeth was half gold. Considered the gem of the collection, I suppose.'

"'A white man's!' I cried again.

"'Of course,' he said. 'Whose else could it be? You don't imagine, do you, that some dentist has come down here to practise his gentle art among a lot of penniless savages? It seems we are not the first whites this bunch has seen. It accounts for the lack of surprise at our color.'

"I'd heard about people being sick with fright, and now I knew what it meant. I felt as if my stomach had dropped away from me.

"'Bailey!' I gasped. 'They'll begin on him. Then our turn will come. We've stopped them for a minute, but that's all.'

"Sangarelli's bushy brows drew together.

"'If I could talk their jabber,' he said gloomily, 'I'd have that big black stiff under control. He's a subject all right.'

"The others came up and we changed the topic. The girls told their story or, rather, Rosalie told it helped out by Clarice and Corinne. The latter still had her leather satchel strapped to her waist. It seemed that the savages had tossed the girls over their shoulders, as you would a stuck pig, and made off with them through the jungle. They had been terrified nearly out of their senses and unable to resist.

"'If only I could have got at my knives!' exclaimed Corinne.

"'I fainted,' remarked Clarice simply.

"'I didn't,' said Rosalie. 'I saw poor Mr. Bailey go down with a spear sticking through his neck and I thought they'd killed Hugh, too. I went mad, I think. I clawed at that awful creature's back till it bled, hoping he would dash my head against a tree, but he only grunted.'

"We came out after a while into an opening—this place where we are now. There were many women and children running to and fro and they set up a dance when they saw us. We were handed over to the women and they took us to a hut and shoved us in. They sat around outside, jabbering among themselves and watching us—"

"Then I got out my knives," Corinne interjected, "and began to juggle them, but all the time I was ready to let anybody who came in have one in the eye."

"I heard Robert call and I answered," continued Rosalie. "And then, after a while, a most frightful yelling came from over this way and the women went tearing off, screaming horribly. Then we ran out of the hut. Now tell us what happened to you."

"I told them."

"Well," said Rosalie, "what are we going to do now? Where shall we go?"

"That was the poser. To go back to that filthy hut we'd been tossed into was not to be thought of, and to attempt to hide in the jungle was madness—it would be a confession of fear. We decided to remain where we were and see what would happen next. There was a clump of palms near by and we sat down in the shade of it. Rosalie spoke with a pale attempt at a laugh:

"It may sound funny to you people, but I'm frightfully hungry. I could eat one of you, if you were nicely browned with plenty of gravy."

"I glanced at Sangarelli; the same thought possessed us both. I made some silly remark about how tough Rosalie would find us and had just finished, when a soft pleading voice proceeded from the jungle to the right. It said:

"It's Bonga Tong's talkin' man. Please, boss men, kin I mek talk wif you-all, jes a minnit?"

"It brought us to our feet. English, such as it was, and in this heathen hell-hole! Sangarelli was the first to recover."

"Whoever you are, show yourself!" he called.

"A man emerged hesitantly from the jungle, evidently under the spell of a potent fear. He was naked save for his breech-clout, and black as any of those we had seen. And, it seemed, he was nearly as wild, for when he was clear

of the brush he fell to his knees and bowed his head three times to the ground.

"Boss men, please doan wuk no cunjur on me," he mumbled. "It's 'Merican nigger fum Souf Ca'liny. I doan belong yere. I's a w'ite man's nigger, I is, an' ef you-all'll jes cuss me out lak at home, I'll bress de Lawd fer it."

"Well then," said Sangarelli, "get up out of that, you — black scoundrel, and be quick about it or I'll put a hoodoo on you."

"The man leaped up, grinning timidly, but, as we could see, mightily pleased."

"T'ank you, boss. Dat sounds lak ol' times," he said.

"I took a hand here."

"Come close!" I ordered. "Now tell us your name and how you happen to be in this nest of pagans."

"Dey calls me Tomba, sah, fer Tom, de name I goes by in Souf Ca'liny, an' I's ben yere gwine on mo' dan two years, as I reckons it, an' I larns dere talk. I wuz cook on de Sally Cotter outer Charleston 'round de Horn. We wuz wrecked offen yere in a big gale an' —"

"I stopped him, impatient to get to another point."

"We were attacked by these people. Why didn't you come forward then?" I wanted to know.

"I wuz fishin', boss, las' night at de souf end of de island. I jes got back an' dey tol' me w'at done happen. Den Bonga Tong—he's de king of dese yere niggers—spec mebbe you-all talk lak me, an' he sent me 'long wif dis yere an' sez you-all is ter 'cept it fer a sign he feel tremenjus friendly wif you. 'Pears lak he set a heap o' store by jes an alley-taw marble,' he apologized anxiously."

"While he spoke Tomba was feeling in his breech-clout. He brought forth something the size and shape of a sparrow's egg and extended it to me. It was a pearl, free from speck or flaw and of a wondrous sheen. The girls exclaimed over it but I hushed them. I didn't want Tomba to think the gift was of value."

"Bonga Tong got mebbe a pint of dem curus marbles," volunteered the darkey. "He keep 'em in a gourd hangin' up in his house."

"We looked at one another. A pint of pearls! This one was worth five thousand dollars if a cent."

"'There are seven of us, and he sends us only one,' murmured Hugh Rodney.

"That gave me an idea. I tossed the pearl at Tomba.

"Take it to your Bonga Tong!" I roared. "Tell him to beware how he trifles with white magic-makers. We must have a marble each, otherwise—listen carefully—a tail, blue and four yards long, shall grow out of his body and wrap itself around him till he is squeezed to death. Can you say that to him somehow—anyhow to make him understand?"

"Tomba stuttered—

"Yassah, yassah, boss, I sholy kin," and prepared to go.

"Wait!" I ordered. "We require a clean new house with two rooms. It is to be built here in the center of this square, and at once. And food must be prepared and sent to us now, and three times each day hereafter. You are to be our servant and talking man and remain near us. When these things are done, we shall be friends with Bonga Tong and, in his hour of need, we will make his enemies crawl before him as worms at his feet. Now get to going and don't let the grass grow under you!"

"It was some speech, that, and I was sweating after it, for at noon in Tonga-long the heat is like a withering flame. Tomba swallowed what I said for gospel and scuttled off.

TOMBA returned well inside an hour at the head of a score of quaking natives loaded with material for building the hut. He assured me it would be finished by nightfall. Then came a brace of women bearing baskets of bananas and coconuts and baked yams and fish. They spread mats of reeds and laid out the food on plantain leaves. We sat cross-legged around the mats and ate, using our fingers for forks.

"But in advance of this I should tell that Tomba humbled himself before us and held out a coconut shell in which were seven pearls of a size and beauty equal to the first he had brought. I think we all went a little dippy at the sight of them. We could talk of nothing else for the time, forgetting that we were marooned on an unknown island a thousand miles from nowhere. After we had

eaten, I maneuvered Tomba off by myself and questioned him closely.

"You say," I began, that you were shipwrecked here two years ago. How did you get ashore?"

"I kin washed in on the main boom, boss, wif two white men. De udders wuz all drowned. It wuz on the east side of de island fum whar you kin see Akoba."

"Akoba? What is that?" I questioned.

"Anudder island lak dis, sah. Dey's fightin' twixt de two of 'em ev'y now an' den. De las' time wuz 'bout a year ago. Bonga Tong went over dere. Nex' time dey comes over yere. Dat's de way dey wuk it, 'pears lak."

"You mentioned two white men who were washed ashore with you," I said. "What became of them?"

"Bonga Tong done et 'em up," he stated simply. "Dey had big doin's over 'em."

"That gave me a nasty turn and I couldn't speak for a minute. Then I asked—

"Why didn't they eat you?"

"Cos I too skinny, I spec. An' den I married one of dere gals—dat one over dere totin' off de scraps—an' dey 'dopted me. But, boss," he added earnestly, "dat ain't gwine ter hol' me, not fer de twist of a pig's tail, ef you-all will take me 'long w'en you mek up yo' mind ter leave yere. I isn't married cos I wants ter be; it's cos I has ter be."

"I'll see about that," I told him seriously, as if we could leave whenever it suited us. "It depends on yourself, if you do everything just as we say."

"I explained to him then about Bailey. I gave him to understand that Bailey was not a magic-maker like the rest of us, or no fool spear could have caused his death. Then I charged him to go to Bonga Tong and say to him that Bailey must be buried like a Christian gentleman, where we all could witness it. If this were not done, and right away, Bonga Tong's tongue would turn to sand in his mouth, and his bowels to ropes of grass.

"It was pulling an awful bluff after what I'd already pulled, but, up to then, it looked as if we had Bonga buffaloed, so I chanced it.

"'T's yo' nigger, boss, I sholy is,"

Tomba protested fervently. 'T's gwine mejitly ter mek talk wif Bonga Tong.'

"I related to the others what I had done about Bailey and, privately, I told Sangarelli and Leclair the fate of the white men from the *Sally Catter*.

"Now we know where that gold tooth came from,' Sangarelli remarked to me.

"Leclair opened his grip and busied himself with some of his tricks. He and Sangarelli talked over a plan the conjuror had formed in connection with Bailey's funeral.

"Pretty soon we heard a loud crackling in the jungle, and, strutting with importance, Tomba appeared. After him came four men bearing Bailey's body on a lattice of bamboos. Two others followed, carrying stone-headed adzes. They stopped at a signal from Tomba, and he addressed me.

"Boss man, Bonga Tong say you is ter pint out whar you please to put dis yere corp.'

"We consulted together and decided on a place under a fine palm near by, and the men with the adzes went to work digging the grave. Leclair suggested that we ought to have Bonga Tong present, so I said to Tomba:

"Go to the king and tell him it is our wish that he and his principal men attend this ceremony. No harm shall come to them.'

"We guessed that the big black was not far off, for we caught shadowy glimpses of moving forms through the mat of leaves and vines. Bonga Tong and his subjects, curious as apes, wanted to see what was going on.

"A great blowing of conches began suddenly, and, shortly afterward, the king and a body-guard of spearmen issued from the brush. They halted at a cautious distance from the now ready grave. They were not a happy-looking lot, but I'll say for old Bonga Tong that he carried himself handsomely in the face of the fear that was on him. He stood immovable, and staring at us with all his eyes.

"I motioned the pall-bearers away and the seven of us gathered about the body. The girls tried to sing what they could remember of a hymn but broke down, and the service came to an end with that.

"Now what I'm going to tell may

sound theatrical and unseemly, but it was done with the double purpose of safeguarding Bailey's remains and still further augmenting our reputation as magic makers, our sole protection against the wild men about us.

"After the body was lowered into the grave, Leclair advanced. He carried a large sheet of white cardboard which he held up for all to see. Then, very slowly, he rolled it into a cornucopia, showed that it was empty, draped a red silk handkerchief over it and raised it at arms' length above his head. He repeated solemnly a patter of some sort and then whisked the handkerchief away. A cloud of fantastic, varicolored paper dolls floated down, arms and legs outstretched, into the grave. From it rose presently a series of querulous squeaks and squalls, ending with a long-drawn moan. Hugh and I immediately fell to and pushed in the dirt, and so poor Bailey was laid to rest. I called out to Tomba:

"Say to Bonga Tong that we thank him for his presence and that he may go now.'

"Believe me he went, and every Tongalongan in sight. Tomba had difficulty in getting the men who were building our hut to return.

THAT night, when we were established in the hut and were going over for the hundredth time all sorts of mad plans for separating Bonga Tong from his pearls by anything short of robbery, we were startled by a pistol shot from the south. The savages had a rousing fire going, somewhere back of the throne, and we could see the glare of it.

"Bailey's gun!" exclaimed Rodney. 'And he had three rounds of cartridges for it. We forgot about that.'

"So we had. Here was a new joy promoter. If Bonga Tong should get the hang of the gun and take it into his head to do a little target practising on us, he'd soon find out our magic didn't make us bullet-proof.

"A great hullabaloo followed the pistol shot, and then we saw a dark shape running toward us in the dim light of the stars. We made the girls stand back and went outside to meet whoever it was. It proved to be Tomba and he was laughing softly to himself.

"'Tama Ka, Bonga Tong's witch-man, kill hisse'f wif dat revolver,' he giggled. "'Death-stick,' dey done calls it now.'

"'Oh,' I said, 'so Bonga Tong had a magic-man of his own.'

"Tomba gave a snort of derision.

"'Hoo! He call hisse'f dat, but I ain't never seed nuffin he could do w'at 'mount ter ennything. He promise Bonga Tong dat he'd wuk a spell on you-all dat in two days would mek you of no mo' 'count dan de fins on a dead shark. Den Bonga Tong hand him dat pistol and he say: "'Tama Ka, w'at you mek of dis? W'at it fer?'" All de time I keeps mum an' lets on 'taint nuffin I's ever seed afore. Tama Ka, he look at it fust one way den de udder, talkin' witch words an' projeckin' wif it. Den —*bang!* off it go an' Tama Ka fall over wif a hole in his head.'

"'Well,' I prompted, 'what next?'

"'Bonga Tong he bustin' mad cos he lose his witch-man an' he plum skairt too. 'Twixt one an' de udder he jes rarin' an' tearin' round. He say he bound ter drive you-all outer yere somehow or he never gwine ter have no peace o' mind agin. Dey's mekin' a big talk 'bout it now. I drifts away so's ter tell you-all.'

"'Good boy, Tomba,' I praised. 'When we leave here we'll take you with us. Do you think you could get that pistol?'

"Tomba shook his head and said:

"'It's layin' dere in Tama Ka's hand an' dey's feared ter tetch it. Ef I done tried it dey'd spicion dere warn't no harm in it an' den—' He spread out his hands.

"Leclaire spoke.

"'I'll get it,' he offered. 'Run back, Tomba, and say to Bonga Tong that seven white marbles must be laid at our door each morning for seven days, then we will talk with him about leaving the island. I'll be there right after you.'

"As a cut in, I'll say here that Leclaire claimed afterward it was a pure inspiration that came to him about the pearls. If by some chance we could get away from the island, we'd have a fortune each, and if we couldn't get away we'd be no worse off than before.

"Leclaire went into the hut and occupied himself with a small bottle from his

grip. He washed his mouth out several times with the contents. Then, from a stock of gallnuts he carried, he filled one with a powder from another bottle, wrapped it in tow and put out after Tomba, for these fire tricks have to be done in a hurry. Sangarelli followed at a discreet distance.

"Leclaire walked boldly up to where Bonga Tong with his chief men stood about Tama Ka. One look they gave as he came out of the darkness toward them, and then all fell down on their faces—even Tomba—with a howl of fright. Leclaire had criss-crossed his cheeks with a phosphorous pencil, and his mouth belched forth smoke and flame. He calmly retrieved the pistol from the dead man's hand and as calmly walked away.

"The next morning we found seven splendid pearls lying at our door.

"I'll pass over the next few days. The natives preserved a careful distance from us and, as for Bonga Tong, that sublime potentate kept himself out of sight in the royal palace, a sizable hut in a grove of coconut palms back quite a distance from the throne. Sangarelli grumbled at this, for he proclaimed that if he could have frequent contact with the king he would master him. The rest of us were well satisfied with matters as they stood.

"We rummaged through the island with Tomba for guide. It was several miles in extent, but low and not very wide. In the north end was a partially bald eminence of perhaps a hundred feet from which Tomba pointed out a misty shadow to the east that he said was Akoba Island. To the west somewhere was the reef on which the *Claudia* was wrecked.

"'If we had a signal of some sort we could set it up here,' remarked Hugh Rodney.

"'We are out of the track of trade,' Bailey said, 'but something might come along. It's a chance.'

"Clarice came forward with the offer of her underskirt, and the upshot of the matter was that Tomba shinned up a tall pine and fastened the skirt to the stem of the tree just below the crown, where it could flutter free of the leaves. It was

a forlorn call to the outer world, but somehow we felt better after making it. None of the Tongalongans meddled with the flag. They thought, I reckon, it had to do with our magic-making.

"Tomba piloted us through the jungle trails leading from the village to the shore. One of them was that along which we were lugged by the savages after the attack on us the day we landed. Another led to a mangrove swamp on the east side, where we saw ranged in a sheltered lagoon the islanders' fleet of war canoes—dugouts made from enormous trees, ninety feet long, some of them, and capable of holding fifty men.

"We asked Tomba to show us where Bonga Tong got his 'marbles,' but he declared he had no knowledge of the place.

"'All I knows,' he said, 'is dat dey gets 'em outer eyesters lak dose in de Ashley River at home, on'y dey isn't no marbles I ever heerd tell of in de Ashley eyesters. Dey doan never let me go 'long wif 'em in de boats.'

"Hugh Rodney thought that trading vessels must put in at the island now and then to get the pearls, but Tomba said none had come since he had been there and he had never heard talk of any. From this we concluded that Bonga Tong simply had a crude instinct for the worth of the things, or else the pearls had a significance of some kind in the spirit worship of the people. However, every morning we found seven fine pearls at our door until the fourth day when, for a very good reason, the tribute ceased.

"Just at dawn of that day a terrific uproar in the south brought us up standing, from the mats on which we were couched. Tomba, who slept under the eaves outside, leaped in among us scared nearly white. For that matter we all were pretty well upset. The men were pouring out from the huts about us and running top speed in the direction of the row. The women and children were scurrying for the jungle.

"Then, tearing toward the hut, we saw a man who fell on his knees when he reached us and let loose a flood of gibberish. Tomba translated it.

"To put it in few words, the Akoba Islanders, taking advantage of a late moon, had paid a surprize call on their

hereditary foes. They had landed on the southeastern point of Tongalong and, creeping through the jungle, had fallen tooth and nail on Bonga Tong and his chiefs. The king had despatched this messenger to implore us to come and redeem the promise to make his enemies crawl at his feet.

"WELL, here was a fool boast returned to me like a boomerang. Bonga Tong had lived up to his part of the agreement and now I was called on to make good my part.

"'Let the heathen rage and imagine a vain thing,' counseled Sangarelli. 'We'd better take to the woods.'

"'And be hunted down and speared by one tribe or the other,' I replied. 'You've got a .45, Rodney, and your cartridges fit Bailey's gun. Let me have a few rounds. I can do better work with a heavier caliber than mine.'

"I was putting on a lot of dog, you see, to keep my courage up.

"'Do you mean that you're really going to mix in with that muss?' Rodney flung at me.

"'It looks like I've got to,' I told him. 'Perhaps I can bring down some of those Akoban bucks and start the rest on their way. It's worth trying. I'll leave my gun with Sangarelli, and you people can keep house while I'm gone.'

"Rodney raised a row over this, and finally it was agreed that he should go with me, while Sangarelli and Leclair stayed with the girls. If we found things framing against us we promised to make a break for the hut and take our finish together. Corinne and Clarice had their knives out and said they'd give an account of themselves before the end came. They were quite cool about it.

"All this took place in half the time I've taken to relate it. Bonga Tong's messenger told us we could distinguish the Akobans by the red clay—war-paint—with which their faces were daubed. We sent the man back to the king to say that we were coming and started after him. Tomba went along to show us a path that would permit us to approach the fight undiscovered.

"The king's house, as I have said, was at some distance south of the square and here the battle was raging at its fiercest.

I CAN'T describe that mix-up; I'm not equal to it. There didn't seem to be any method of attack or defense. It was just a milling herd of yelling, sweating blacks pounding away at one another with great knotted clubs. Others, standing apart, threw their spears where they saw an opening. A lot had got their quietus and the ground was well carpeted with them.

"It was broad day now and we could easily distinguish the enormous bulk of Bonga Tong with his halo of yellow hair laying about him royally with a club like the thigh of an ox. Hugh and I selected a tree each, at the edge of the jungle, and got behind them. We could pick out the painted Akobans all right, but in that surging mass it was difficult to shoot without hitting friend as well as foe.

"I'll fire first and reload," I said to Hugh. "Then you take it up. In that way we won't waste ammunition on the same target."

"I let go and, by good luck, caught an Akoban square between the eyes. He was one of their chiefs, I guessed, for a cry went up from those near and a dismayed pause in the fighting ensued. The Tengalongans knew what that pistol shot meant and raised yells of triumph. I let go again and bored a man through the arm. An Akoban spied the smoke floating away from before my tree and pointed to it. With that I fired my remaining shots rapidly.

"The marauders, bewildered and panic-stricken, drew back to themselves, and just then Hugh opened fire. A red-daubed heathen in the front line spun around on his heel and went down, kicking like a rabbit. Hugh kept on until I had reloaded and then reloaded his own gun. Finally, we poured it into them together. The Akobans, with the wrath of whatever gods they knew, full upon them, as they thought, were in full flight by this time, with Bonga Tong and his screeching rabble after them. Not a savage was left in view except the dead and dying. Tomba came out of the bush and capered about like a monkey.

"Dis yere's de king of 'em," he yowled, pointing to the big Akoban Hugh had brought down. "He got a necklace like Bonga Tong's. O'ny de

king wears dat. Hoo, hoo! It sent 'em scootin' lak de debbil."

"He went on with his crazy dance and presently we lost sight of him.

"Hugh and I looked at each other and laughed jerkily. We had become killers of men, and it's a thought you can't accustom yourself to all in a moment.

"I want to have a look inside that royal palace and see what it's like," said Rodney at last.

"The pearls popped into my mind and I decided to go with him. I don't think either of us would have taken any—it would have been plain, cowardly stealing, under the circumstances—but we certainly had an itch to gaze on that gourd in which, according to Tomba, the gems were kept. We had started for the hut when bedlam broke out far behind us. It was pierced by a woman's soul-rending scream and a single pistol shot.

"'Good God!' burst from Hugh and we broke into a race for our own hut back in the square.

TO anticipate in a word what had happened, a small party of Akobans, purposely detached, as we figured it, from the main body, but delayed from some cause, had landed on the northeast end of the island and made a descent on the village from that direction. Our hut, large and off by itself, was possibly taken for the king's and they centered their attack on it.

"As Hugh and I swept along he gasped out—

"I've only three cartridges left."

"I've two," I told him. "We must make every shot tell."

"The hut had three doors, or, I should say, openings closed with mats at night, that looked south, east and west, and it was around these the savages were clustered. They seemed to be afraid to storm the hut, possibly because the white-faced beings within were creatures portentously strange to them, and that single shot had put the fear of sorcery in their breasts. As we raced by the throne, the Akobans saw us and set up a shout. They turned to meet this new appearance, and then we witnessed a sight that thrilled us.

"Corinne stepped into view at the east door and Clarice at the west. Some-

thing shining swiftly and noiselessly left their hands and plumped into a naked back before them. Another and another daggered messenger found its mark and still others followed.

"The knives!" cried Hugh. "They are throwing their knives, God bless them!"

"We were in pistol-range by this and stopped and dropped to our knees. It was a ticklish business, firing into that bunch with the hut just beyond, but we aimed low and fired slowly, with our hearts behind each shot. They told, but the savages did not run. They were cerebrally benumbed, we guessed, by the winged death that was smiting them from all sides.

"Then occurred a thing to laugh at later, but not then, not by a jugful. Rosalie appeared at one of the doors and Leclaire at another; and with all their might hurled a small, sizzling, ragged-looking object in among the pack of blacks.

"Great Scott! Fire-crackers!" Hugh exclaimed.

"They were. Leclaire had bought them in Honolulu for the Fourth, wherever it should find him. He was like a boy about such things.

"Well, those crackers spit and popped and whizzed with a very fury of energy, and that flock of Akobans, released suddenly from the bonds of stupefaction that had held them, bolted for their boats, bawling fearfully at every jump.

"We ran up to the hut and there found out why Sangarelli had fired only one shot. The cylinder had jammed and, before he could get it working, a spear caught him in the side. He was lying on the floor in a puddle of blood.

"I guess I'm all in, Duke," he said. "I wish I could have got another chance at Bonga Tong. I had him coming all right."

"It seemed to be the thing uppermost in his mind, his chief regret. Later he spoke of the pearls and instructed me to send them to his old mother in Chicago if we ever got away from the island.

"We tried to cheer him up and told him he wasn't going to die. Leclaire had drawn out the spear-head and Rosalie had staunched the wound a little with her handkerchief. Now she set about bathing and dressing it. Tomba came

sneaking in while she was doing this. He looked on a moment and then ran out. He returned soon with a wad of green leaves he had chewed to a pulp and said it was what the Tongalongans cured their hurts with. I tore a strip from my shirt and bound the poultice on with that. Sangarelli motioned me to bend close to his mouth. He whispered:

"When I go, put me away at night. You don't want these — blacks to think they can kill a magic-man. Tell them I flew off on a broomstick—any old thing—and will come back and take Bonga along next time if he don't watch out."

"The conceit seemed to please him, for he chuckled over it every now and then as he lay there. The fellow appeared determined to die, but I'll say here that he didn't.

"Clarice and Corinne had recovered most of their knives and were quietly cleaning them while Leclaire and I, sitting in the door by Sangarelli, talked over what had happened. Hugh and Rosalie didn't have much to say. They sat in the interior of the hut and the two were not so far apart that you could drive a cart between them. Tomba had gone off again somewhere. The darkey seemed to be filled with a torturesome spirit of unrest.

"AN hour or more passed. Then an inferno of conches, yells, a sort of wailing chant persisting through it all, drilled in on us. We took it for the victorious return of the Tongalongans. It was that and more, for after a time we perceived coming toward us a procession of spearmen with the great figure of Bonga Tong striding at its head.

"Coming to thank us for driving off the Akobans," I gave as my opinion.

"Draw me back out of sight. You don't want that push to see me like this," ordered Sangarelli. "Lord," he moaned, "what a chance I'm missing at that big baboon!"

"Leclaire and I moved out from the hut to meet the royal visitor. As he drew near I became impressed with the fact that something was wrong. In the midst of the spear-bearers was carried on a litter the body of a dead man.

"The king and his *cortège* stopped a

few paces from us. The corpse was brought forward and deposited in the space between. Then all save Bonga Tong prostrated themselves before us and remained so. He pointed to the body and to us, and stretched forth his hand in a gesture of supplication.

"'What the devil does he mean?' whispered Leclair. I was at as great a loss myself. I shook my head at the savage and said, futilely of course—

"'We don't understand.'

"Bonga Tong spoke then, gobbling like a turkey. We made out the name Tomba, repeated several times.

"'He's asking for his talking man,' guessed Leclair. 'Where in thunder is that darkey?'

"I shook my head at the king again. He jabbered to his men, and they rose from the ground. Once more he went through the pantomime of pointing to the body and to us. In the baffled pause that followed, a voice—Sangarelli's—hissed through the reeds that walled the hut:

"'You fools! He's asking you to bring that stiff to life. It's somebody he dotes on.'

"'Well, by George!' grumbled Leclair. 'The more you do for some people, the more they want you to do.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'and here's where, if we don't do it, we get done.'

"It certainly looked that way to me, for Bonga Tong's great flat face took on the beginnings of an ominous and wide-spread scowl. He spoke and a man dashed off in the direction from which they had come. Meanwhile Bonga started another pantomime. He held up his thumb, described a circle around the nail of it and made a sweeping gesture from east to west three times, after which he stooped and laid in a row on the ground seven bits of stone. We stared at him stupidly, but Sangarelli's voice reached us again:

"'He's reminding you of the pearls. Probably he's sent back for more, thinking that's what you are holding out for. Where in — is Tomba?'

"He hadn't ceased when Tomba hove in sight, running from north of the hut.

"'A boat!' he cried. 'Close in!'

"But Bonga Tong was bawling at him and he fell on his face as if he were shot.

Fear was at his elbow and rescue—if such it was—at a distance. We ourselves were incredulous of his news; it seemed too ridiculously opportune to be true, and we were in a pickle that consumed all our present attention.

"Tomba rose at a word from the king, who gobbled at him passionately. Tomba was shaking like a leaf when he turned to us. He stammered out:

"'Dat corp is Bonga Tong's fustest son, w'at come next ter him. He say dey isn't no spear kill him fightin'; it's a round hole in his head lak w'at Tama Ka got. Bonga Tong say you-all done it an' you is fer mek him live agin mighty quick. Ef you doan do it dey's gwine ter be some w'ite meat 'long o' de dark at de big eatin's ternight.'

"It almost knocked the pins from under us. They were going to have a cannibal feast, and we were to be present, if not active, unless we could bring a miracle to pass.

"'Stave them off—promise anything!' called Sangarelli. 'Maybe the boat will get here in time, if Tomba is right.'

"Sangarelli's voice had grown remarkably strong.

"**T**OMBA was speaking again, his eye fixed fearfully on the runner who was coming back from his errand. He said:

"'Bonga Tong say he got a big red marble he gwine ter give you-all ef you do w'at he ask. It's the onliest one he got lak dat. Oh, Lawd, boss men, oh, Lawd, oh, Lawd, w'at we-all gwine ter do now!' he yelled.

"The runner arrived. He held his open hands out wide, gobbled and was still.

"'He say dat red marble ain't dere no mo'. It's gone!' interpreted Tomba tremblingly.

"Bonga Tong seized a spear from one of his men and stabbed it in the ground. It cast but a short shadow, for the sun was now high. With his toe Bonga Tong drew a line in the sand across the shadow, hardly a hair's breadth from the tip of it. He came forward and extended his hand with the fingers spread like a huge toasting-fork; then he spoke.

"'He say,' faltered Tomba when the other had finished, 'dat he spec you-all

done cunjur dat marble fum him an' dat, bein' lak it's so, you is already paid fer de job he's laid out fer you. Ef you doan mek 'live dat corp 'fore de shadder cross dat line, he say he gwine ter have de lot of us on de coals soon as dey kin mek a fire.'

Tomba concluded with a repetition of his wail of the moment before—

"'Oh, Lawd, boss men, w'at we-all gwine ter do now!'

"Well, it surely was the question. I'd got my own revolver to working again, and it was in my pocket. I might shoot down this terrible black. Yet of what avail would it be? His men would butcher us just the same.

"I questioned Tomba about the boat. Was he sure of what he'd seen? He swore he was. In quest of leaves for the poultice, he had gone to the hill where the signal flew. He had seen a speck far away to the west that he thought might be a boat. He had said nothing to us about it, for he wasn't certain. But when he went again there was no longer any doubt. It was a steamer and the smoke was pouring from her funnels. She was heading straight for the island.

"All the time we were speaking, our eyes were fixed on that line in the sand—Leclaire's, mine, and those that were in the hut. The shadow was growing shorter; it was nearly touching the mark when Sangarelli called in a loud voice:

"'Tell him, Tomba, that at sunset his son shall come to life. Our magic is working now, but not till the sun goes down can his spirit be brought back from the journey on which it has gone. Tell him that—quick, you — fool! The shadow is at the line!'

"The effect of that deep, hidden voice was perceptible on Bonga Tong even before Tomba spoke. Yet the big savage hesitated; he had begun to doubt our potency. He half turned to his men, possibly to give the death signal, and I was fetching out my pistol for a crack at him, when up from the watery west rose the long hoarse wail of a steam siren.

"We shouted in the madness of the joy it brought us. Leclaire and I whirled about like dervishes. Rodney and the girls ran out and joined in the dance. Tomba gobbled something, we knew not what, at Bonga Tong, strutting impor-

tantly before him. We were fools in the excess of our joy, for help was yet distant and at a word from Bonga Tong we should have died.

"Again the siren screamed, and after that a signal gun roared.

"'Tell Bonga Tong to go,' barked Sangarelli at Tomba. 'Tell him the magic has begun to work and wo be to him if he lingers here.'

"Tomba repeated this in a yell of triumph. Bonga Tong's men caught up the corpse and, with Bonga Tong far, very far in the lead, they scampered away.

"WELL, that's the story, except to say that it was a British gunboat cruising out of her course that saved us. They had spied the wreck of the *Claudia* and sent a boat off to investigate. On the companionway door they found nailed a line poor Bailey, on a long chance, had written, telling where we were going. Hugh Rodney, as soon as Bonga Tong had fled, rushed to the beach, and the gunboat landed a detachment of marines to bring us down from the hut, Sangarelli on a stretcher. Bonga Tong, bedeviled and bewildered by five days of magic wonders, did not lift a hand against us. We sailed away like a picnic party on a Summer's day.

"This pink pearl I'm wearing I got in trade from Tomba for my four white pearls. They say it's worth twenty thousand dollars. The rascal had filched it from the palace while Bonga Tong was in pursuit of the Akobans. It had begun to dawn on him that these marbles were of value, since we were all so eager for them. He didn't take more from the gourd, he said, because he was afraid they'd be missed—just like a pilfering darkey anywhere you find him.

"Rosalie's four pearls added to Hugh's set them up in housekeeping, and Leclaire had to find another helper. In short, thanks to Bonga Tong, we all became acquainted, for a time, with the pulsing pride of a bank account.

"Sometimes I think I'll have a play made from that adventure and film it. But I don't know. I guess the same old hash we're passing out will go down with the public yet a while, so what's the use of wasting money on something new until you have to?"



MAN to MAN

A FOUR-PART STORY
PART TWO

By Jackson Gregory

Author of "Silver Slippers," "The Bells of San Juan," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

ON THE trail toward Packard's Grab, Steve Packard, rising in his stirrups, saw a girl in a red cloak standing perilously near the sheer bank of a lake just off the trail. Then suddenly he heard a low cry and saw that the girl had disappeared.

A few moments later Steve rose to the surface of the lake with the girl struggling in his arms and saw for the first time that she wore a bathing-suit. Anger blazed in her eyes.

"You're about the freshest proposition I ever came across!" she snapped.

After the girl had voiced at great length her opinion of Packard for interrupting her swim, she gave him another surprise, for he discovered she had come to the lake in a high-powered touring car.

"Surely," he thought, "the country has changed during the twelve years I have wandered."

But when she failed to start the car Packard found a way of avenging his shattered pride, for she was finally forced to ask him for help. He gave it.

Stopping later at a rather dilapidated ranch-house, Steve asked for food and lodging for the night. A person who might once have been a real man opened the door. He invited Steve in and called to "Terry" to get food for the stranger.

"If he's hungry let him forage for himself," came the answer, and Steve discovered that Terry was the girl of the red automobile.

From Terry Temple he heard much about Ranch Number Ten where he had been brought up. His father had died leaving the ranch heavily mortgaged to "Hell Fire" Packard, Steve's grandfather. That man, whom Terry described as being "so low-down mean that the devil himself wouldn't have him," was now running the ranch and considered himself practically the owner. Bill Royce, the ranch's

former manager, who had taught Steve all he knew about riding and shooting, was now blind, and in his place was Blenham, Hell-Fire Packard's trusted man.

When Terry finally discovered that Steve was a Packard she swept out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

At Ranch Number Ten Steve found a fight just ending. Barbee, one of the men, was lying on the floor, his face swollen, swearing vengeance on Blenham. Bill Royce, the blind ex-manager, was there too.

"You're fired, Blenham," said Steve sharply.

"Who the — are you?"

When Steve disclosed his identity Bill Royce gasped, as did many of the others. Blenham sneered, but not for long, for he found no sympathy among the ranchers.

That night Steve learned many things from the blind Bill Royce:

Steve's father, the day before his death, had entrusted Royce, not blind then, with ten thousand dollars, charging the manager to keep the money for his son. Royce had hidden it in the foundations of the ranch-house.

That same night the ranchers had decided to play a trick on one of their number, Johnny Mills, who was very fond of quail hunting and who boasted he never missed a shot. The boys had drawn the shot from his gun, leaving only the powder. Royce, on his way to the McKittrick place near Ranch Number Ten where Mills did his hunting, had received both barrels from an uncharged shotgun squarely in the face.

"That's how my lights went out, Steve."

"Know who did it, Bill?" asked Steve.

"If I knew—for sure—I'd get him! Whoever it was, thought I had the money on me, but come with me, Steve, and we'll get it now. I looked last Saturday night to make sure it was there."

They found the wallet, and back in the house Steve opened it. It contained—not ten one-thousand-dollar bills—but ten one-dollar bills. Steve controlled his feelings and, looking into the blind eyes of Royce, assured him that the money was all there.

The next morning out of Bird Cañon whizzed a glistening automobile, making at break-neck speed for Ranch Number Ten. Steve at first thought of Terry, but as the car drew up he saw his grandfather, a man of over six feet, straight as a ramrod and with a chest as powerful as a blacksmith's bellows.

The interview between the two was very short and to the point. Hell-Fire Packard wanted his grandson to take Blenham back and fire Barbee whom Steve had appointed

foreman. Steve refused, and the old man raved, swearing that inside a year he would own the ranch and informing Steve that the amount of the mortgages he held was fifty thousand dollars.

Steve replied that he possessed in all seventy-five and the old man left in a rage.

At the little town of Red Creek, which was really two separate towns—half Packard, half opposition—Steve discovered that Blenham had collected ten one-dollar bills the previous Saturday night. The ten he had found in the wallet Steve left with Hodges, the proprietor of the Ace of Diamonds, the saloon patronized by the Packard faction, telling Hodges to turn the money over to Blenham and tell him that Steve Packard had found it.

VIII

STEVE PACKARD, walking swiftly, reached the west bridge just before the front tires of Terry's car thudded on the heavy planks. He glimpsed Blenham jogging along behind her and knew that Blenham had seen him.

But his eyes were for Terry now. She, too, had recognized him with but a few yards separating them. She gave him a blast of her horn warningly and, slowing down no more than was necessary for the sharp turn, came on across the bridge. He read it in her eye that it would be an abiding joy for Miss Terry if she could send him scampering out of her way; the horn was like the challenge—

"You stand aside or I'll run you down!"

With no intention of going under the wheels Steve waited until the last moment and then jumped. But not to the side as Terry had anticipated. Obeying his impulse and taking his chance, he sprang up on her running-board as she whizzed over the bouncing boards of the bridge, grasping the door of her car to steady himself. The feat safely accomplished in the mere flash of time necessary for it, he grinned up into Terry's startled eyes.

"We meet again," he laughed sociably. "Howdy!"

Her lips tight-pressed, she gave her attention for a moment to her wheel and the rutty road in front of her. Her cheeks were red and grew redder. Perhaps a dozen men here and there upon the street had seen. She had meant them to see; it would have tickled her no little to have had them note Steve Packard flying wildly to the side of the road while she shot by. She had not counted upon him doing anything else.

"Smarty!" she cried hotly.

"Smart enough to climb out from under when an automobile driven by a man-slaughter artist comes along," he chuckled, sensing an advantage and drawing a deep enjoyment from it. "Don't you know, young lady, you've got to be careful sometimes? Now, if you had run over me——"

"Serve you right," sniffed Terry.

"Yes, but think! Running over a man who hasn't had time to take his spurs off yet! Why, you stood all kinds of chances of getting a puncture! You don't want to forget things like that."

Terry bit her lip, stepped on the throttle, swung across the street, made a reckless turn and brought up in front of the lunch-counter.

"Do you know," remarked Packard lightly, ignoring the fact that she had answered him with only the contempt of her silence, "you remind me of my grandfather. Fact! You two have the same little trick of driving. Wonder what would happen if you and he met on a narrow road?"

"At least," said Terry, eying him beligerently, "he is a man, if he is a scoundrel. Not just a hobo!"

"Oh, I didn't mean to call you a scoundrel! Nor yet to say that you struck me as mannish. Of course——"

"Oh, you make me sick!" cried Terry. And she flashed away from him, going into the lunch-room.

He followed her with speculative eyes. Then he glanced across the street. Blenham, dismounted in front of the Ace of Diamonds, was watching. As Packard turned, Blenham went into Hodges' saloon.

"Wonder what he'll have to say when Hodges hands him his roll?" mused Packard.

Well, he had accomplished his purpose. He had done all that he had hoped to do in Red Creek this afternoon, had assured himself that his suspicions against Blenham were justified by the fact and that the theft was only a week old. He went back slowly to his horse in front of the Old Trusty. But his eyes were frowning thoughtfully.

What would be Blenham's next move? What would Blenham do, what would he say, when Hodges gave him Packard's message? Might he, in an unguarded moment, give a hint toward the answer of that other question which now had become the only consideration: Were the larger bank-notes still hidden at Ranch Number Ten, or had Blenham already removed them?

Instead of mounting to ride away, Packard hung his spurs upon his saddle horn and turned again into Whitey Wimble's place.

The late afternoon faded into dusk, the first stars came out, Whitey Wimble lighted his lamps. Steve, advised of the fact by the purr of a motor, knew when Terry left the lunch-room and drove to the store for a visit with the storekeeper's wife. Was she going to remain in town overnight? It began to look as if she were.

Across the street Hodges came out and lighted the big lamps at each side of his doorway. A cowboy swung down from his horse and went in, his spurs winking in the lamplight as if there were jewels upon them. A buckboard pulled up and two other men went in after him. A voice in sudden laughter boomed out. Saturday night had come. As Whitey Wimble had predicted, the boys were showing up and Red Creek stood ready to lose something of its brooding afternoon quiet.

Once again Packard crossed the bridge and made his way along the echoing wooden sidewalk to the Ace of Diamonds. A dozen saddle-horses were tied at the hitching-rail. Among them was Blenham's white-footed bay. Up and down the street glowing cigaret-ends like fireflies came and went. In front of the saloon a number of men made a good-natured, tongue-free crowd, most of whom had had their first drinks and were beginning to liven up as in duty bound on a Saturday night.

A four-horse wagon came rattling into town from the east to pour out its contents, big, husky men, at Hodges' door. Among them Packard recognized one man. He as the lumber-camp cook from whom he

had gotten coffee and hot-cakes the other day, that morning after he had refused to accept Terry's cool invitation to breakfast.

"I'll have to look in on those fellows tomorrow," he thought as they shouldered past, boisterous and eager. "Grandy sure had his nerve cutting my timber with never so much as a by-your-leave."

Their foreman was with them; one glance singled him out. He was of that type chosen always by Old Man Packard to head any one of the Packard units, a sort of confident mastery in his very stride, the biggest man of them, unkempt and heavy, with a brutal face and hard eyes. Joe Woods, his name. Packard had already heard of him, a rowdy and a roughneck but a capable timberjack to the calloused fingers of him. He followed the men into the saloon.

At his place behind the long bar was Hodges, busy filling imperative orders, taking in the money which he counted as good as his once it left the paymaster's pocket. But it struck Packard that the bartender did not appear happy; his face was flushed and hot, his eyes looked troubled. Now and then he flashed a quick look at Blenham who stood leaning against the bar at the far end, twisting an empty whisky-glass slowly in his big hand, staring frowningly at nothing.

"Hodges is a fool and he has just been told so," was Steve's answer to the situation.

"Hi, Blenham!" called big Joe Woods. "Have a drink."

"No," growled Blenham, deep down in his throat. "I don't want it. I——"

His eyes, lifted to the lumber-camp boss, passed on and rested on Steve Packard. He broke off abruptly, his look, changing probing, seeming full of question.

"Get the money I gave Hodges for you?" asked Packard, coming into the room. "The ten one-dollar bills that you left behind you?"

"They wasn't mine," said Blenham quickly, his hand hard about the whisky-glass, his manner vaguely nervous. "I tol' Dan to give 'em back to you."

Steve smiled.

"Funny," he said carelessly. "Hodges said——"

"I made a mistake," called Hodges sharply. "I got Blenham mixed up with some other guy. I don't know nothin' about these here."

He slammed the little roll down on the bar.

"Come get it, if you want it."

Packard promptly stepped forward, taking the money back into his hand.

"I figured there was a chance to make ten dollars, easy money, if I just walked across the street for it," he said, looking pleasantly from Hodges to Blenham. "Sure, I want it. It's luck-money; didn't you know? You see, when a man loses anything he loses some of his luck with it; when another man gets it, he gets the luck along with it. Thanks, Blenham."

Blenham made no answer. His eyes were bright with anger and yet troubled with uncertainty. The uncertainty was there to be recognized by him who looked keenly for it. Blenham did not know just which way to jump. And there would have been no reason for indecision if Blenham knew that he had those other, bigger bank-notes safe.

AT the 'rear of the long room a man was dealing cards for Seven-and-a-half. As if to demonstrate the truth of his boast about "luck-money" Steve stepped to the table, the roll of bills in his hand. He dealt a card. Without turning it up to look at it he shoved it under the ten bank-notes.

"Standing?" said the dealer.

Steve nodded.

"Playing my luck," he answered.

The dealer turned lack-luster eyes upon Steve's card, then upon his own, which he turned up. It was the four of clubs.

"I've the hunch that will beat you, pardner," he said listlessly. "But I'll come again."

He turned another card, a deuce.

"That'll about beat you," he suggested. He leaned forward for Steve's card. "Unless you've got a seven in the hole."

And a seven it was; the bright red seven of hearts. The dealer paid, ten dollars to Steve's ten.

"Come again?" he asked.

"Not tonight," returned Packard. "I took just the one flitter to show Blenham."

He turned and saw that Blenham had already slipped quietly out of the room. Dan Hodges, his face a fiery red, was just coming back from the card-room. With him was the big timber boss.

"Tin-horn!" shouted Joe Woods at Packard. "Quitter!"

A quick joy spurted up in Steve Packard's heart; he was right about Blenham.

Blenham, filled with anxiety, had gone already, would be rushing back to Ranch Number Ten to make sure if the ten thousand dollars were safe or had been discovered already by the rightful owner.

He had slipped away hurriedly but, after the fashion of a careful, practical man, had taken time to confer with Dan Hodges, had commissioned Joe Woods to hold Packard here. And so, though he could not remember of having ever run away from a fight before, Steve Packard was strongly of that mind right now.

"Joe Woods, I believe?" he said coolly, his mind busy with the new problem of a new situation. "Boss of the timber crew on the east side of Number Ten? I was planning on riding out tomorrow for a word with you, Woods."

"So?" cried Woods. "What's the matter with havin' that word tonight?"

"Haven't time," was the simple rejoinder. "I'm about due across the street now; at Whitey Wimple's place."

"Which is where you belong," growled Woods, his under jaw thrust forward, his whole attitude charged with quarrelsome intent. "Over at the 'White Rat's' with the rest of the Willies!"

The ever-ready Packard temper was getting into Steve's head, beating in his temples, pounding along his pulses. He never had a man bait him like that before. But he strove to remember Blenham only, to take stock of the fact that this was a bit of Blenham's game and that any trouble with another than Blenham was to be avoided at this juncture. So, though the color was rising into his face and a little flicker of fire came into his eyes, he said briefly:

"Then I'd better go across, hadn't I? See you in the morning, Woods."

But there is always the word to whip the hot blood into the coolest head, to snare a man's caution out of him and inject fury in its stead, and Joe Woods, a downright man and never a subtle, put his tongue to it. On the instant Packard gave over thought of such side issues as a man named Blenham and hidden bank-notes.

He cried out inarticulately and leaped forward and struck. Joe Woods reeled under the first blow full in the face, staggered under the second and was borne back into the tight-jammed crowd of his followers.

The men about him and Packard withdrew this way and that, leaving empty floor space to accommodate the two pairs of shuffling boots. Joe Woods wiped his lips with the back of a big, hairy hand, saw traces of blood and charged. The sound of blows given and taken and of little grunts and of scraping feet were for a space the only sounds heard in Hodges' saloon.

Packard's attack had been swift and sure and not without a certain skill; against it Woods opposed all he had, ponderous strength, slow moving, brutal force, broad-backed, deep-chested endurance. But from the first it was clear to all who watched and suspected by Woods himself that he had chosen the wrong man.

Steve was taller, had the longer reach, was gifted by the gods with a supple strength no whit less than the bearish power of the timber boss. With ten blows struck, with both men rocking dizzily, it was patently Steve Packard's fight. But a dull, dogged persistence was in Joe Woods' eyes as again he shook his head and charged.

Steve struck for the stomach and landed—hard. Woods doubled up; the sweat came in drops upon his forehead; his face went suddenly a sick white. But the light in his eyes, as again he lifted his head, was unaltered.

"He can lick me—I know it! He can lick me—I know it!" he muttered and kept muttering. "But, by —, he's got to do it!"

And Steve did it and men looked on queerly, appraising him anew. He took Woods' blows when he must and felt the pain go stabbing through his body; but he stood up and struck back and forced the fight steadily, crowding his adversary relentlessly, seeming always to strike swifter, harder.

It was a bleeding fist driven into Joe Woods' throbbing throat, followed by the other fist, going piston-like, at Joe Woods' stomach, that ended the fight.

The bigger man crumpled and went down slowly like one of his own trees just toppling, and lay staring up into Packard's face with dull eyes. Steve stepped over him, going to the door.

"I'll see you in the morning, Woods," he panted.

But again boots were shuffling on the floor and already several men, Dan Hodges among them, were between him and the

door. It dawned upon him that Blenham must have given emphatic orders and that Blenham had the trick of exacting obedience.

"Hold him here," shouted Hodges, and being a man of little spirit he withdrew hastily under Steve's eyes, thrusting another man in front of him. "Keep him for the sheriff. Startin' a fight in my place—it's disturbin' the peace, that's what it is! I won't stand it!"

Packard drew back two or three paces, his eyes narrowing. At that instant he was sure of what he saw in the faces of at least three of the men confronting him; they were going to rush him together.

And now Joe Woods was on his feet again. Packard drew still farther back, getting the wall behind him. And then came a diversion. It was Joe Woods speaking heavily:

"I fought him fair an' he licked me. Think I'm the kind of a she-man as stands for you guys buttin' in on my fight? Stand back an' let him go!"

"Blenham said—" screamed Hodges.

"— Blenham an' — you, too!" growled Woods. "It's my fight an' his. Let him go!"

They let him go, drawing apart slowly. With watchful eyes Steve passed down the little lane they made. At the door he turned, saying briefly—

"I'll see you in the morning, Woods!"

Then he went out.

IX

RETURNING at once to the Old Trusty, on the way passing Terry's car which still stood in front of the store, Steve Packard asked for the use of a telephone. Whitey nodded toward the office, a little room thinly partitioned off from the larger. A moment later Barbee's voice was answering from Ranch Number Ten.

"He's on the way, Barbee," said Steve quickly. "Left Red Creek just a few minutes ago. I'll trail him. Give him the chance to prowl around a little; try and find what he's after. But don't let him get away with it! Understand? Shoot the legs out from under him if you have to. I'll give you a month's pay for the night's work if you nail him with the goods on."

Clicking up the receiver he went out on the street again, giving no heed to the many glances which followed him. They knew

who he was; they were speculating on him. "Ol' Man Packard's gran'son," he heard one man say.

He marked another nudge his companion and point.

In the thick darkness lying under the poplar tree it was several minutes before he was certain that his horse was gone. He had tethered the animal himself; there was no dangling bit of rope to indicate a broken tie-rope. Blenham, the practical, had simply taken thought of detail.

"Not missing a single bet, is Blenham," he thought savagely.

He swung about and reentered the saloon. A buzz of talk up and down the long room promptly died away as again the eyes of many men traveled his way. It struck him that they had all been talking of him; he knew that they must have marked those signs which Joe Woods' fists had left on his face; he stood a moment looking in on them, conscious for the first time of his rapidly-swelling right eye, seeking to estimate what these men made of him.

It seemed to him that the one emotion he glimpsed on all hands and in varying degrees was distrust. Little cause for surprise there: he was a Packard and this was not the Packard side of Red Creek.

"Somebody's put me on foot," he announced crisply. "I left my horse outside, tied. It's gone now. Know anything about it, any of you boys?"

They looked their interest. Hereabouts one man did not trifle with another man's horse. But there was no answer to his direct question.

"I've got to be riding," he went on quietly. "Who can lend me a saddle-horse for the night? I'll pay double what it's worth."

Whitey Wimble gave his bar a long swipe with his wet towel.

"If you're askin' favors, seems to me you're on the wrong side the street, ain't you, stranger?"

"Meaning I am a Packard?"

"You got me the fir's' time. That's Packard's Town over yonder. Your crowd always——"

"Look at my eye!" then said Steve quickly.

A big man with a thin little voice at the far end of the room giggled.

"I seen it already," said Wimble.

"Know Joe Woods? Well, he's got an-

other just like it. Know Blenham? Blenham sicked him on me! Know old man Packard? He's sicking Blenham on me. Want to know what I want a horse for? Blenham's got a head start and I want to overhaul him! To tell him he's a crook and a thief. Now is this side of Red Creek open to me or is it shut? What's the answer, Whitey Wimble?"

Wimble appeared both impressed and yet hesitant. Here was a Packard to deal with and Whitey Wimble when taking over the destiny of the Old Trusty had been set clear in the matter that he had a ripe, old feud to maintain; and still, looking at it the other way, here was a man who carried the sign of Joe Woods' fist upon his bruised face, who announced that he was out to get Blenham; that there was open trouble between him and old man Packard.

Whitey Wimble, beginning by looking puzzled, wound up by turning a distressed face toward Steve.

"It's kind of a fine point," he suggested finally. "Now, come right down to it it sort of looks to me——"

"Fine point!" cried Steve hotly, a sudden anger growing within him as he thought how Blenham had played the game all along the line, how Blenham might well prove too shrewd for a boy like Barbee, how a set of prejudiced fools here in the Old Trusty by denying him the loan of a horse might seriously be aiding Blenham whom none of them had any love for. "Why, —— it, man, haven't I told you that Blenham has just put a raw deal across on me, that he's coming close to getting away with it, that all I ask is a horse to run him down? Who's going to let me have one? I'm in a hurry!"

Never until now did he realize how strong a factor in the life of the community was the prejudice against his blood. On every hand he saw doubt, clouded eyes, distrust. Plainly many a man there held him for a liar; would even go so far, it was possible, as to suggest later that Steve Packard had meant to steal the horse he asked for. Steve stared about him a moment, his back stiffening. Then, with a little grunt of disgust, he strode across the room.

"At least," he flung over his shoulder at Whitey Wimble, "I am going to use your telephone again!"

Without waiting for an answer and caring not the snap of his fingers what that answer might be, he went to the telephone, jerking

down the receiver, saying bruskiy to the operator:

"Ranch Number Ten, please. In a hurry."

He waited impatiently and, it seemed to him, an inexcusably long time. Finally the operator said after the aloof manner of telephone girls—

"I am ringing them."

And again—

"I am ringing them."

And then—

"They do not answer."

And at last, and then only when Steve made emphatic that there must be some one at the Number Ten bunk-house at this hour, the girl said—

"Wait a minute."

And after that:

"There seems to be something the matter with the line. I can't raise any of the ranch-houses out that way. We'll send a man out in the morning."

So he couldn't even warn Barbee that Blenham had made good his head-start; that Blenham was plainly of one mind tonight; that it was up to young Barbee to keep his eyes open and his gun cocked. He began to understand why his grandfather had made Blenham one of his right-hand men; he had the cool mind and the way of acting quickly which makes for success.

"I got a horse for you, pardner," said a slow voice as Packard came out of the office. "A cayuse as can't be beat for legs an' lungs. Come ahead."

Steve looked at him eagerly. He was a little fellow, leather-checked, keen-eyed, leisurly; a stranger, obviously a cowboy.

"I work for Brocky Lane," offered the stranger as they went out together. "Know him, don't you?"

"I did a dozen years ago," answered Steve absently. "Where's your horse?"

"You're Steve Packard, ain't you? You done Brocky a favor when you was a kid, didn't you? Brocky told me. Brocky's done me a favor. I'm doin' you a favor. That squares us up all 'round. Like a circle, all in a ring, sort of; get me?"

"Yes," agreed Steve, feeling vaguely that the cowman had unknowingly touched upon a problem in higher mathematics.

He slipped a hand into his pocket.

But the friend whom an old, long-forgotten kindness raised now for him at his need, shook his head, would have none of

Packard's money and led the way to a shed behind the saloon. Out of the darkness he brought a tall, wall-eyed roan, quickly saddled and bridled and handed over to Steve.

"Heeled?" came solicitously from the little man as Steve swung up into the saddle.

"No."

"Well, Blenham is. He goes that way all the time. An' he's a right good shot, the boys say. If there's some real sour blood stirred up between him an' you there's no use bein' a — fool, is there? The store's apt to be open yet; there's a first-class double-barrel shot-gun, second-hand but as good as new, in the window. Only seven dollars an' a half."

"I'll send the horse over to Brocky's tomorrow," called Steve. "And as for being square—call on me at any time for the next favor. So long."

"So long," responded the slow-voiced man.

STEVE swung out toward the east, curbing his mount's eagerness, settling himself in the saddle for a couple of hours of hard riding. Slowly he would warm up the big roan, letting him out gradually, steadily. Already he sensed that in truth here was "a cayuse hard to beat for legs an' lungs." And Blenham's head-start was but a matter of minutes, fifteen or half an hour at most.

Fifty yards and Steve whirled his horse and rode back, going straight to the store. After all since Blenham was playing a game in which the stakes were no less than ten thousand dollars, since Blenham was without doubt the man who had sought to kill Bill Royce six months ago for the very same money, since Blenham always "went heeled and was a right good shot," why then, as Brocky Lane's cowboy put it, "there was no use bein' a — fool." And to ride a hundred yards or so and buy a Colt .45 and a box of cartridges required but a moment.

In the store the long shelves upon one side held dry-goods, while upon the opposite shelves a miscellany of groceries was displayed; toward the rear was the store-keeper's assortment of hardware near a counter piled high with sweaters, boots, chaperejos, all jumbled hopelessly.

At the flank of this confusion was a show-case containing a rather fair line of

side-arms. Steve, his eye finding what it sought, went straight to the back of the house. And then, looking through an open door which gave entrance to the living-room of the storekeeper's family, his glance met Terry's. She was rising to her feet, drawing on her gauntlets.

"That's your train now," a woman's voice was saying.

Packard heard the whistling of a distant engine. He lifted his hat, she promptly whirled about, giving him her back to look at.

"Here's what I want," said Steve as the storekeeper came to his side. "That .45, and a box of cartridges."

Terry turned again quickly; he surprised a little look of interest in her slightly-widened eyes. A man doesn't buy a gun and a box of cartridges at this time of night unless he has a use for them. Packard took up his new purchases, went out, swung again into the saddle and clattered down the street.

The night was bright with stars, clear and sweet. Presently, with only a handful of miles behind him, the moon rose above the distant ridge, at the full, glorious and generous of light. He loosened his reins a little, gave the big roan his head and swept on through the ghostly lighted country.

Now and then, remarking some old remembered landmark, he glanced from it to his watch; more than once, having slipped his watch again into his pocket, he leaned forward and patted the horse's neck.

Then—he had done a little more than half the distance and was riding through the thick shadows of Laurel Cañon, which marks the beginning of the long grade—the unforeseen occurred; the unlooked-for which, he knew now, he would have fully expected, had he not counted always upon Blenham playing a lone hand.

In the middle of the inky blotch made by the laurels standing up against the moon there was a spot through which the moon-rays found their way, making a pool of light. As Packard rode into this bright area he heard a rifle-shot, startlingly loud; saw the spit of flame from just yonder, perhaps ten feet, certainly not more than twenty feet away; felt the big roan plunge under him, race on unsteadily, and sink.

He slipped out of the saddle as the horse crashed down in the bushes at the side of the road, and as he did so emptied his revolver

into the shadows whence had come the rifle-shot. But he knew that he was a fool to hope to hit; the man had had time to select his spot, to screen his own body with a boulder or fallen log, to leave open behind him a way to safety and darkness.

"Not Blenham himself but one of his crowd did that," muttered Packard as he turned back to the fallen horse. "Just to set me on foot again. He isn't up to murder when he sees another way. And for ten dollars he could hire one of his hangers-on to kill a horse."

Well, it was just another trick for Blenham. On foot now he must make what time he could to the Pinchot farm, some three or four miles further on, demand a horse there and pray that Barbee was equal to his task. But first he must not leave the big roan to suffer needlessly and hopelessly.

He struck a match and made a flaring torch of a little wisp of dry grass. Loving a good horse as he did he felt a sudden and utterly new sort of hatred of Blenham go rushing along his blood. It was with a deep sigh of relief that he straightened up when he saw that either chance or a remarkable skill with a rifle had saved Brocky Lane's roan from any protracted pain.

Packard pushed on, seeking to make what time he could, breaking into a jog-trot time and again upon a down-slope, conserving wind and strength for the up-hill climbs, keeping in the shadows for the most part but taking his chances over and over in the moonlit open.

Yet it was being borne in upon him that it was useless to hurry now; that Blenham had made of his advantage a safe lead; that he might as well slow down, make a cigaret, take his time. And still, being the sort of man he was, he kept doggedly on, telling himself that a race is anybody's race until the tape is broken; that Blenham might be having his own troubles somewhere ahead; that quitting did no good and that it is not good to be a "Quitter." But he had little enough hope of coming up again with Blenham that night.

And then, when he had been on foot not more than twenty minutes, a faint, even drumming sound swelling steadily through the night somewhere behind him put a new, quick stir in his blood. He stopped, stood almost breathless a moment, listening, looking.

The smooth drumming grew louder; suddenly topping a rise the two headlights of an automobile flashed into his eyes. Terry Temple, her errand done in Red Creek, was racing homeward.

"And I'll beat Blenham to it yet!"

Where the moonlight streamed brightest and whitest across the road he sprang out so that she could not fail to see him, tossing up both arms in signal to her to stop. Her headlights blinded him one moment; he heard the warning blast of her horn; he entertained briefly the suspicion that she was going to refuse to stop.

Incredible—and yet he had not thought of her own likely emotions. To have a man leap out into the road in front of her, all unexpectedly, waving his arms and calling on her to stop—Why, she'd think herself fallen into the hands of a highwayman!

She was coming on, straight on, her horn emitting one long, sustained shriek of menace. Packard ground his teeth; either she did not recognize him and was bound upon getting by him, or she did recognize him and was accepting her opportunity to emphasize her attitude toward him.

In any case she was going by, she in whom lay his sole hope to come to grips with Blenham. If he let her evade he might as well quit, quit in utter disgust with the world.

With the world? Disgust with himself, that he had let Blenham beat him, that he wasn't much of a man, that his old grandfather was right about him. Her car was rushing down upon him; if he let it pass, why, he'd be letting not only a girl laugh at him but he'd be letting his chance rush by him. His chance that loomed up bigger than the oncoming machine and more real; his chance not for tonight alone but forever after.

For if Blenham beat him tonight and his grandfather beat him again later on, he knew that he would pass away from the country about Ranch Number Ten, that he would give over all sustained effort to make something of his life, that he would go back to drifting, rounding out his life after the fashion of the last twelve years. It was while Terry's car was speeding toward him that all of this ran through his mind.

There was the possibility that, knowing who he was, Terry would try to bluff him out of the road, counting confidently upon

his leaping to safety at the last moment; there was the other possibility that she mistook his motives and would run him down in a sort of panic of self-defense.

Packard, with his rather clear-cut conception of the girl's character to steer by, saw the one way to master the situation. Whirling about, his back to her now, he broke into a run, speeding along the road in front of her. As he ran the hard lines about his mouth softened into a rare grin: he'd have her guessing for a minute, anyway. And by the time she got through guessing—

HE had duplicated his feat of the afternoon at the bridge in Red Creek. Terry, in her first astonishment that the man should turn and run straight on in front of her, slowed down, hesitation in her mind. What was he up to? Then there came sudden shadows in a narrow part of the road, a sharp turn, the absolute necessity of slowing down just a trifle more and then—

"It's all right; go ahead!" called Packard lightly. He was standing on her running-board.

She had thrown off her hat to the cool of the evening. As they passed out from the shadows he could see her eyes. He pushed back his own hat and Terry saw his eyes. For a moment, while the car sped on, neither spoke.

Looking at her he had glimpsed wonder, an annoyance that was swiftly growing into anger, and a certain assurance that Miss Terry Temple fully intended to remember this day and to square with Stephen Packard.

Returning his look, Terry had seen but one emotion in his eyes; pure triumph. She could not know how the man of him, having but just now succeeded in this first task he had set himself, felt a sudden confidence of the future.

"If I had let you go by," said Packard quietly, "I should have felt that I had let my destiny pass me!"

"Don't you start in getting fresh just because it's moonlight!"

Steve looked puzzled, understood, put back his head and laughed joyously. Then his face suddenly serious again, he considered her speculatively. Now for the first time he became aware that Terry was already carrying a passenger. A small man,

Japanese, immaculate and frightened so that his teeth were chattering.

He was Iki, had come into Red Creek this evening by train and was due to cook for the Temple ranch. Just now he was screwed up in his place, ready to jump if Steve moved his way, his purse clutched in his plump hand, half-offered already. Steve beamed upon him, then turned his eyes, still speculative, upon Terry.

"Do you care to tell me," said Terry tartly, "why you're always getting in my way? Think you're smart, climbing aboard like a monkey? You've done the trick twice; do I have to look out for you every time I take the car out?"

"I just happen to be in a hurry," said Packard. "And going your way. Somebody shot my horse back there for me."

Her eyes grew actually round; Iki shivered audibly. But in the girl's case the emotion aroused by Packard's words was short lived. Why should a man shoot the horse under Steve Packard? Disbelief reshaped her eyes; she cried out at him as her foot went down on the accelerator:

"Think I'm the kind to believe all the yarns you can tell? If you want to know what I think, Steve Packard—you're a liar!"

He laughed, well content with the moment and the situation, well content with his unwilling companion just as she was.

"And do you know that what I told you this afternoon was true?" he countered cheerfully. "You're just like my blazing old grandy! Instead of being my grandfather he ought to be yours. By golly, Miss Terry Pert," teasing the blood higher into her cheeks with his laughter, "that might be arranged, too! Mightn't it? You and he——"

"Oh!" cried Terry, and he had no doubts about her meaning what she said. "Oh, I hate you! Yes, worse than I hate old Hell-Fire; he keeps out of my trail, anyway. And you, you big bully, you woman-fighter, you—you——"

Just in time he guessed her purpose and threw out his hand across her steering-wheel and grasped her right hand. The car swerved dangerously a moment, then came back to its steady course as Steve's other hand closed over Terry's left. Slowly, putting his greater strength gently against hers, he took her automatic from her.

"Thirty-eight caliber?" he said coolly. "There's nothing little about your way of doing things, is there? And you meant to drill a hole through me, I'm bound!"

Terry's face gleamed white in the pale light; and he knew from the look in her eyes as they seemed fairly to clash with his, that it was the white of sheer rage.

"I'd just as lief blow your head off as shoot a rattlesnake," she announced crisply.

"I believe you," he grunted. "Just the same, if you'd only——"

"Oh, shut up!" she cried shaking his hand free from hers on the wheel and driving on recklessly.

"I would like to mention," came an uncertain voice from a very pale Japanese, "that I must walk on my feet. I am most regretful——"

"Oh, shut up!" cried Terry. "Shut up!"

And for the rest of the ride both Iki and Steve Packard were silent.

X

"HERE'S where I get down," said Steve after a very long silence during which he watched Terry's pretty, puckered face while Terry gripping her wheel recklessly assumed the responsibilities of their three lives, hurling the car on through the moonlit night.

Iki, breathing every now and then a long quivering sigh and forgetting to breathe between whiles, held on tightly with both hands.

"Here's where I get down," said Steve again.

Here the road followed the line of his north fence; less than a mile to the southward he could see a light like a fallen star, gleaming cheerfully through the trees.

He sensed rather than saw a quick stiffening of Terry's already tense little body; fancied that the car was steadily taking on greater speed, read Terry's purpose in a flash. If he forced her to carry him, why then she would take him as far out of his way as possible.

"Terry Temple!" he cried sharply, leaning in a little toward her. "What's the matter with you anyway? What if we're not friends exactly? I never did you any harm, did I? Why, good Lord, girl, when a man tells you his horse has been shot under him; when he is trying to overhaul the crook at the bottom of the whole mess

whom you hate as well as I do. Oh, I mean Blenham and you know it——"

"Liar!" cried Terry, flashing her eyes at him and back to the road alternately white with the moon and black with shadows. "Liar on two counts! Didn't I see your horse this afternoon? Tied in front of Wimple's whisky joint? Oh, it's where I'd expect him! Well—and you needn't think I looked to see or cared, either—when I came by just now, leaving town, I saw your horse standing there yet. So you needn't——"

"That couldn't be," muttered Steve. "And yet— Anyhow, I've got to get off here. Will you stop, please?"

"No, I won't stop please! Nobody asked you to ride that I know of. Get off the same way you got on!"

Packard realized two things very clearly then: If he jumped with the car going at its present speed he would probably break his neck; if he gave any considerable time to arguing the matter with her he would be carried as far in five minutes as he could walk in an hour.

"I mean business tonight," he told her bluntly. "If you don't slow down before I count ten I am going to lean out a little—like this—and shoot a hole in your tire. Then, if you keep on, I'll shoot a hole in the other tire. Understand?"

Terry laughed mockingly.

"You wouldn't dare!" she told him serenely. "That would be some kind of a crime; they could put you in jail for it. You'd be scared to."

"One, two, three, four, five," he counted briskly.

"I would seek to interrupt to advise, oh, Miss Lady!" chattered Iki. "His voice has the sound of bloodthirstiness."

"Six, seven, eight, nine—ten," counted Packard.

Terry sniffed. He leaned out; she saw the glint of the moon upon his revolver.

She threw out her clutch and jammed down both brakes, hard. Steve swung out and down to the ground. The car, as if it had gained fresh power from the fact of being freed of his weight, shot forward, stopped again.

"Not exactly friends?" cried Terry, and he marked a new trembling in her voice. "I should say not. You—you darned snake, you!"

And she was gone, spinning along into

the night, hidden from him by the first hill around whose base the road curved. He stared after her a moment, shrugged, turned his back and strode rapidly toward the Ranch Number Ten corrals.

He had planned correctly; he had correctly measured Blenham's impulses and desires. Further, he had come in time, just in time.

THE light was in the ranch-house. Though but little after eleven o'clock it was dark within the bunk-house, the men long ago asleep. But Barbee was awake, his wits about him; his voice and Blenham's, both quiet, met Steve's ears as he slipped about the corner of the house, coming under the window where the light was.

Blenham was talking now. He sat loosely in a chair, his hands one upon the other, idle in his lap. Barbee, his eyes narrowed and watchful, stood at the far side of the room. On the floor, near his feet, was a revolver; from its position Steve guessed that Barbee had just kicked it safely out of Blenham's reach. Barbee's own gun was in the boy's hand.

"You're a pretty foxy kid, Barbee," Blenham was saying tonelessly. "You got the drop on me; you're the firs' man as ever did that little trick. Yes; you're a pretty foxy kid!"

Barbee shrugged and spat and answered Blenham with a curse and grunted—

"Nobody's askin' your opinion, Blenham."

But Steve saw and Blenham must have seen the gleam of triumph in Barbee's eye.

"What are you goin' to do with me?" asked Blenham presently.

"Nothin'," replied Barbee. "Jus' keep you where I got you until Steve Packard comes back. Which ought to be mos' any time now."

"He'll be late," said Blenham. "He won't be here for two or three hours. Suppose while we wait, let's me an' you talk!" he said sharply, sitting forward in his chair.

"Well?" said Barbee. "Talk an' be — to you, Blenham. Only you don't talk yourself out'n the hole you're in right now. An', I promise you, you make a quick jump for a get-away, an' I'll shoot you dead."

"I know," Blenham nodded. "You'd

do it. But I ain't goin' to try any fool thing like that. I'm jus' goin'—like I said to you; let's talk. What's Packard payin' you for this night's work?"

"He's no tightwad, if that's what you're drivin' at; I'd of done tonight's job an' glad of the chance an' you know it, Blenham, an' never asked pay for it. But I'm drawin' down a whole month's pay extra, if I've got you like you are when he comes in."

Blenham laughed softly. Then he moved the hands resting in his lap. Packard saw that they were folded loosely about the old leather wallet.

"He's sure payin' you generous, Barbee," jeered Blenham. "You know it! Why, look here: This is yours an' more to trail it if you jus' pocket your gun an' let me go! I ain't askin' much an' I'm payin' my way. Look it over, kid!"

Packard saw how he stripped a bank-note from a thin sheaf of its fellows; how he tossed it toward Barbee. It fell to the floor; a little draft set it drifting; Blenham set his foot upon it.

"Look at it!" he snapped, for the first time giving sign of the strain he was laboring under. "It's yours—if you ain't a — fool."

Barbee, not to be tricked were this some ruse to snare his attention said crisply—

"Put your han's up while I get it!"

Blenham obeyed; Barbee stooped swiftly, all the while with eyes riveted on his prisoner. Then, the muzzle of his gun raised another inch, he looked at what he held. When he looked back at Blenham his eyes were round, his mouth stood a little open.

"My —!" he gasped. "It's a thousan' dollars!"

"Yes," said Blenham quietly. "It's a thousan' dollars. That's quite a little wad, Barbee; it's more, anyhow, than an extra month's wages, ain't it? An' it's yours if you want it! Think of the times you can go on, think of the way you could make Red Creek open its eyes! An' there's more to come if you take that an' let me go an' jus' watch my play an' take a chance with me when I say so. What's the word, Barbee?"

Packard, having held back thus long, remained motionless, glimpsing unexpectedly something of Barbee's soul; watching a little human drama, become spectator to the battle royal of the two contending factions which made up a man's self.

It seemed to him that young Barbee was pale and grew paler; that a shiver ran through him; that he was, for the moment, like one drugged. And, side by side, two emotions, both primal and unmistakable, peered out of his eyes; a savage hatred of Blenham, a leaping greed of gold.

Thus for a little forgetting his own interest in this scene, Packard watched, wondering what the outcome would be. Blenham tempted. Barbee hesitated.

"Right here in my hand," Blenham was saying coldly, "are nine more like that, Barbee. Ten thousan' dollars in all. One thousan' to go to you for jus' keepin' out of my way. I said once you're foxy kid. Now let's see if you are. Tie to a man like me that's out to make a pile, a — big pile, Barbee—or hang to a fool like Steve Packard an' take his pay in dribbles an' let him be the one that gathers in all the big — kale. Him an' me when I get things goin' right; him, an' me an' you jus' gettin' the scraps. Which is it? Eh, kid? Which way're you goin'?"

Barbee held the bank-note in his left hand; slowly his calloused fingers closed tightly about it, crumpling it, clutching it as though they would never release it. And then slowly the fingers opened so that the wrinkled bit of paper lay in his palm under his eyes. Barbee ran his tongue back and forth between his dry lips. Steve, staring in at him through the window, saw in his eyes the two lights, that of hate, that of covetousness; they burned side by side as a yellow candle and a red might have done.

WHICH way would Barbee go? Did Barbee know? Blenham did not; Steve did not. Suddenly, seeing how the two fires flickered in Barbee's eyes, Steve cried out within himself:

"It's unfair! It's asking too much of Barbee!"

And aloud, shoving the nose of a Colt .45 through the window pane which splintered noisily:

"Hands up there, Blenham! Good boy, Barbee. You've got him, all right! Watch him while I slip in."

Blenham jumped to his feet, threw out his arms and cursed savagely. Then, grown abruptly quiet, he dropped back into his chair, his two big hands loose about the wallet hidden under them. Steve threw a

leg over the window-sill and came in, his gun ready, his eyes taking stock of Barbee while they appeared to be for Blenham only. And Barbee, white now as he had never been until now, shivered, filled his lungs with a long sigh and fell back a couple of paces, staring at Steve, at Blenham but most of all at the thing in his hand.

"You put it across, Barbee!" cried Steve heartily.

He reached forward and snatched the wallet from Blenham's knee. Blenham's big hands, clenching slowly, fell to his sides; Blenham's eyes, sullen and evil, clung steadily to Packard's.

"You've saved me my inheritance tonight; you've helped save me my ranch. You've helped me square with a — dirty dog named Blenham!"

Like a dog Blenham showed his teeth. His drawn face was stamped in the image of fury.

"You're a sweet picture of a dead game sport," he growled, shifting nervously in his chair. "I ain't got a gun; you an' Barbee have; go ahead an' call me all the names you like!"

Steve counted the bank-notes in the wallet. Blenham had spoken truly; there were nine one-thousand-dollar bills. He put out his hand to Barbee for the tenth. Barbee, staring strangely like one rudely awakened from sleep and not yet certain of his surroundings, let the bank-note go. His eyes, leaving it at last to rest steadily on Blenham, looked red and ugly. Packard slipped the wallet into his shirt.

"Barbee," he said quietly, while he busied his eyes with Blenham's slightest movement, "this money was left to me by my father. He gave it to Bill Royce to keep for me. You know all that Bill has stood from Blenham; now you know why. There's quite a load of scoundrelism dumped off at Blenham's door. And, thanks to you, we've got the dead wood on him at last!"

"What are you goin' to do with him?" Barbee, speaking for the first time since Steve's entrance, was husky voiced.

Blenham shifted again in his chair; now there was only cold hatred in the boy's look.

"We'd ought to be able to put him in the pen for a good long time."

Blenham laughed jeeringly.

"Try it!" he blustered. "See what you

can prove, actually prove to a jury an' a judge! Try it! You go to the law an' see——"

"To — with the law!" cut in Steve, and though his voice was not lifted for the implication Blenham shot a quick, startled look at him.

And both Blenham and Barbee, listening wonderingly, understood that here was a Packard talking; that in the shoes of the grandson, even now, there might be standing the big bulk of the uncompromising grandfather.

"What do I want with the law now? Blenham would wriggle out, I suppose; or he would get a light sentence and trim that down to nothing with good behavior. No, Blenham, if you ever go to jail it will be somebody's else doing; not mine. Is it just jail for the man who shot down my old pardner in cold blood, just for the sake of a handful of money? Is it to be just jail for the man who has made Bill Royce's life a hell for six months? Just jail for the brute who had a horse shot under me tonight? Why, — you—" and at last his voice broke through the ice of restraint and ran out angrily, full of menace—"do you think I'm going to let you go out of my hands into the hands of judge and jury after all you've done?"

Blenham sprang up, drawing back. The muzzle of Steve's .45 followed him threateningly.

"Barbee," said Packard, his voice once more under control, "go to the bunk-house and send Bill Royce here. Don't wake the other boys. Then you come back here with him. And bring a whip with you."

"A whip?" repeated Barbee.

"Yes; a whip. Any kind you can lay your hands to in a hurry; quirt or buggy-whip or bull-whip!"

Blenham watched Barbee go. Then, drawn back into a corner of the room, sullen and vigilant, he stood biting nervously at a big, clenched, hairy fist.

XI

BILL ROYCE, hastily and but half dressed, came promptly to the house, stumbling along at Barbee's heels. Blenham, his silence and watchfulness unbroken, still chewed at his fist. Barbee brought a heavy blacksnake in his hand.

"Barbee says you want me, Steve?" said Royce from the threshold. "An' that Blenham's here?"

"Yes, Bill," Steve answered. And to Barbee: "Close the door behind you. Lock it. Give me the key. Now fasten the shutters across both windows."

Barbee obeyed silently. Blenham's eyes followed him, seeming fascinated by the whip in Barbee's hand.

"Listen a minute, Bill," when Barbee had done. "I want to tell you something."

And, as briefly as might be, he told Royce of the ten dollar bills substituted for the real legacy, of the results of his evening in Red Creek, of Barbee's trapping Blenham, of the recovery of the ten thousand dollars, of a horse shot dead on the Red Creek road.

"Then," said Royce at the end of it, "I was right, Steve? An' it was Blenham as gave me both barrels of Johnny Mills' shot-gun? It was Blenham for sure, wasn't it, Steve?"

"Yes, Bill. It was Blenham."

"An'—an' Blenham's right across there now? It's him I can hear breathin', Steve?"

"Yes, Bill."

"An'—an' what for did you sen' for me, Steve? What are you goin' to do to him?"

Packard beckoned to Barbee. The boy came quickly to his side, giving him the blacksnake. Steve laid it across Bill Royce's hand.

"I'm going to give him a taste of that, Bill," he said. "And I wanted you here. You can't see it; but, by —, before I am through with him, you can hear it!"

"Goin' to tie him up an' whip him, Steve? That it?"

"Pack of low-bred mongrel pups!" cried Blenham wrathfully, for the first time breaking his silence. "Sneakin', low-lived curs an' cowards!"

"That it, Steve?" persisted Royce. "Goin' to tie him up an' give him — with a blacksnake?"

"I am going to whip him—for your sake, Bill," answered Steve sternly.

He yanked off his coat, tossing it behind him.

"Get the chairs and table out of the way, Barbee! But I am not going to tie him up; that isn't necessary, Bill. I can handle him with my hands without tying him; I am going to do it. And then I am going to take the whip and lay it across him until his

hide is in strips—or until he begs to be let go. Ready, Blenham?"

"Mean that?" snarled Blenham, a new look in his eye. "Mean you're goin' to give me an even break?"

But Bill Royce, fairly trembling with an eagerness strange to him, had clutched at Steve's arm, had found it, was holding him back, crying out excitedly:

"You're a good pal, Stevie; you're the best pal as ever was an' I know it! Didn't I always know you'd be like this? But can't you see, Stevie, can't you see it ain't enough another man should lick him, even when that man's my pardner, even when it's Stevie himself doin' it! It ain't the same unless— Oh, ———! Ain't I been waitin' an' waitin' to get my hands on him!"

Blenham, a little comforted by Steve's words, jeered openly now.

"Come on, Blind Billy," he taunted. "An' when I've throwed you into the junk pile I'll take on your friends! One at a time—you know how the sayin' goes!"

Steve was shaking Royce's hand from his arm.

"Let me do this for you, Bill," he said firmly. "It's only fair. If you could see it would be different."

But Royce clung on desperately, crying out insistently:

"Blind as I am, I can lick him! I know I can lick him! Ain't I done it in my sleep a dozen times, a dozen ways? Ain't I always promised myself sometime I'd get him in my two hands, I'd feel him wriggle an' squirm. This is my fight, Steve, an'— Blenham, where are you?"

"Here!" cried Blenham. "An' gettin' tired of waitin'!"

Royce plunged toward him. But Steve Packard caught his old friend about the body, holding him back a moment.

"Easy, Bill," he said gently. "Easy. I was wrong, you are right. It's your fight. But take your time. Get your coat off. That's it. Better climb out of yours, Blenham. Barbee, stand by that window there; if Blenham tries to get out stop him. I'll stand here. All ready, Bill?"

"Ready!" cried Royce, his voice a roar of eagerness.

"All ready, Blenham?"

"Ain't I said it?" jeered Blenham.

"Then—" Suddenly Steve had snatched up the lamp, blowing down the chimney and plunging the room into thick

darkness—"go to it! The light is out, Bill! The room is pitch black. You're as well off as he is. And now, old pardner. Now!"

It was suddenly very still in the room; the thick, impenetrable darkness seemed almost a palpable curtain screening what went forward; the silence was for a little literally breathless.

Then there came the first faint, tell-tale sound, the slow, tortured creaking of a board as a man put his weight upon it. Through the darkness, across the room, Bill Royce was going slowly, questing the man who, surprized by the action of Steve's which had reduced his advantage over a blind man, held to his corner. And then, stranger sound still through that tense silence, came Bill Royce's low laugh.

"Good boy, Steve," he said softly. "I'd never thought of that! In the dark Blenham's as blind as me! How do you like it, Blenham? How'd you like to have it this way all the time?"

Blenham's only answer lay in his leaping forward, out from his corner, and striking; Royce's answer to that was another quiet laugh. He had slipped aside; Blenham had failed at the thin air; Royce, grown still again, knew one of the moments of sheer joy which had been his during these last weary months.

Packard and Barbee, frowning unavailingly toward each little noise, could only guess at what went forward so few inches from them. A scraping foot might be either Royce's or Blenham's; a long, deep sigh or quick breathing now here, now there, might emanate from either man. The strange thing, thought both Barbee and Packard, was that even ten seconds could pass without these two men at each other's throats.

But, a supreme moment his at last, Bill Royce found himself grown miserly in its expenditure; he would dribble the golden seconds through his fingers, he would draw out the experience, tasting its joy fully.

For the moment his blindness was no greater than Blenham's; for a little Blenham would grope and wonder and hesitate and grow tense after the fashion the blind man knew so well. And then at the end, when an end could no longer be delayed, Bill Royce would mete out the long delayed punishment.

But, since the natures of both men were

downright, since their hatreds were outright, since there was little of finesse in either and a great impatience stirring both, Royce's playing with Blenham was short.

There came a sudden shuffling of feet—and Royce's laugh; a blow landing heavily—and Royce's laugh; another blow, a grunt and a panted curse from Blenham—and Royce's laugh.

And then only a scraping of feet up and down, back and forth along the bare floor, the thudding of heavy shoulders into an unexpected wall, the impact of fist against body. In the utter darkness the two men gripped each other, struck, swayed together, staggered apart, only to come together again to strike harder, more merciless blows.

PACKARD and Barbee now held their breaths while the others panted freely; both Packard and Barbee, stepping quickly now this way and now that as the battling forms swayed up and down, sought to gauge what was happening by the sounds which came to their ears.

Muttered imprecations, scuffling feet in a rude dance of rage, another heavy, thudding blow, a coughing curse. Whose? Blenham's, since after it came Bill Royce's laugh. Another blow, fresh pounding and scraping of boots—blow on top of blow, curse on top of curse—a man falling heavily—

Who was down? Royce or Blenham?

"Bill!" called Packard. "Bill!"

No answer save that of two big bodies rolling together on the floor. Both were down, Royce and Blenham. Both were fighting, wordless and infuriated. Who was on top?

No man on top long, no man under the other more than a second. The rolling bodies struck against Packard's leg and he drew back, giving them room. The dust puffing up from the floor filled his nostrils. The room was becoming unendurably close, sickeningly close. The sweat must be streaming from both men by now. Packard sniffed, fancying the acrid smell of fresh blood.

Again the room grew silent save for heavy breathing; the big bulks no longer rolled and threshed and whipped here and there; Packard and Barbee wondered.

"——!"

It was a cry of mingled rage and pain; it came bursting explosively from Blenham's lips. Royce's laugh followed it; Packard shivered.

"Bill!" he cried. "Bill!"

Royce did not answer; perhaps for the very good reason that he did not hear. There were other matters engaging his attention just solely and exclusively. The fighting fury, the hate frenzy was riding him and he in turn was riding his enemy. Cool sanity and hot blood-lust do not find places side by side in the same brain. A second time came the horrible cry from Blenham. Packard struck a match hastily and lighted the lamp.

Packard and Barbee together dragged Royce away, letting Blenham lie there. Both men were naked to their waists, their shirts and undershirts in rags and strips hanging grotesquely about their hips; Royce looked like some hideously painted burlesque of a ballet dancer in a comic skirt. Only there was nothing of burlesque or comedy in his face.

Packard, glancing from him down to the tortured body of Blenham that breathed jerkily, noisily, turned with a sudden revulsion of feeling and hurled the heavy black-snake away from him. He had not fancied the sharp smell of fresh blood.

"I got him!" said Royce shakily. "With my two hands, got him! Didn't I, Stevie?"

"Better than you know, Bill!" muttered Packard. "Better than you know."

The thing had been an accident, at least in so far as Bill Royce's intent was concerned. Packard knew that; he knew that his old pardner fought hard, fought mercilessly, but fought fair. But in a larger sense was it an accident? Or rather a mere retributive punishment decreed by an eternal justice? There in the pitch dark, for no man to see the how of it, this is perhaps what had happened:

There had been an old, long-roweled Mexican spur hanging on the wall; Royce's shoulder or Blenham's had knocked it down; their feet had pushed it out to the middle of the floor. They had fallen, together, heavily; they had rolled. Blenham had gone over on his face, Royce's hands worrying him. The spur——

But it mattered little how it had come about. The result was the thing. Blenham would never see with his right eye again.

XII

THEY did what they could for Blenham — which was but little — and let him go when he was ready. Before daylight he had ridden away, dead white, sick-looking and wordless save for his parting words in a strangely quiet voice——

"I'll get all three of you for this, s'elp me!"

They had bound his head up in a strip torn from an old sheet; the last they saw of him in the uncertain light was this bandage, rising and falling slowly as his horse bore him away.

Blenham gone, Barbee and Bill Royce went down to the bunk-house again, slipping in quietly. Steve Packard, alone in the ranch-house, sat smoking his pipe for half an hour. Then he went to bed, the bank-notes still in his shirt, his gun under his pillow.

Twice last night he had said to Joe Woods, the lumber-camp boss, "I'll see you in the morning."

Morning come, Steve breakfasted early, saddled his horse and turned out across the fields to meet the rising sun. And it seemed to his fancies, set a-tingle in the early dawn freshness, that the rising sun, ancient symbol of youth and vigor and hope with triumph's wings, was coming to meet him.

At this period of the day, especially when he rides and is alone and the forests thicken all about him, man is prone to confidence. It had been a simple matter, so he looked upon it now, to have discovered the truth of the substituted bills last night; as simple a matter had been his winning at Seven-and-a-half or his whipping big Joe Woods or his recovery of the lost legacy.

Blenham, or rather an agent of Blenham, had killed his horse; what then? His destiny had stepped forward; Terry had come; he had whizzed back to the ranch in her car and on time.

What if the ranch were mortgaged and to the hardest man in seven counties? What if his grandfather had obviously fallen supine before the old man's tempting sin, which is avarice, and was bound to break him? Was fate not playing him for her favorite?

To Steve Packard, riding to meet the sun and to keep his promise to the lumber boss, the world just now was an exceedingly

bright and lovely place; in this hour of a leaping optimism he could even picture Terry Temple in a companionably laughing mood.

So early did he take to saddle that the fog end of the dawn was still sweet in the air when he passed under the great limbs of the stragglers of the forests clothing his eastern hill-slopes. He noted how between the widely separated boles the grass was thick and rich and untrampled; reserved against the time of need. There was no stock here yet.

He passed on, swung into the little-used trail which brought him first to the McKit-trick cabin where a double-barreled shotgun six months ago had brought Bill Royce his blindness; then to the lumber-camp a mile farther on. Both were on the bank of Packard's creek; the flume constructed by Joe Wood's men followed the line of the stream.

The new sun in his eyes, Steve drew his hat low down on his forehead and looked curiously about him. The timberjacks had come only recently; so much was obvious. They had come to stay; that was as plainly to be seen. Rough slabs of green timber, still drying and twisting and splitting as it did so, had been knocked together rudely to make a long, low building where cook and cookstove and two-plank table indicated both kitchen and dining-room.

A half-dozen other shacks and lean-to's, seen here and there through the trees, completed the camp. Great fallen trees,—they were taking only the full-grown timber—looking helpless and hopeless, lay this way and that like broken giants, majestically resigned to the conqueror's ax.

Here in the peace and quiet of the pinking day this inroad of commercialism struck Steve suddenly both as slaughter and sacrilege; among the stalwart standing patriarchs and their bowed brethren he sat his horse staring frowningly at the little ugly clutter of buildings housing the invaders.

"My beloved old granddad had his nerve with him," he grunted as he rode on into the tiny settlement. "As usual!"

The cook, yawning, bleary-eyed, unthinkably tousled, was just bestirring himself. Steve saw his back and a trailing suspender as he went into the cook-shed carrying some kindling wood in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. It was only when Packard, having ridden to his

door and looked in, startling the cook into swinging about, that the dull-eyed signs of a night of dissipation showed in the other's face.

"Up late last night, I'll bet," laughed Steve, easing himself in the saddle. The cook made a face unmistakably eloquent of a bad taste in his mouth and went down on his knees before his stove, settling slowly like a man with stiff, rheumatic joints or else a head which he did not intend to jar.

"Drunk las' night," he growled, settling back on his haunches as his fire caught. "A man that'll get drunk is a — fool. I'm t'rough wid it."

"Where's Woods?" asked Steve. "Up yet?"

"Yes, rot him, he's up. He's always up. He's—holy smoke, I got a head!"

"Where is he?" demanded Packard.

The cook rose gently and for a moment clasped his head with both hands. Then he immersed it gradually in his bucket of icy water. After which, drying himself with a dirty towel and setting the bucket of water on his stove, he turned red-rimmed eyes upon Steve.

"You're the guy I fed the other mornin', ain't you?" he asked.

Steve nodded.

"More'n which," continued the cook, "you're the guy as licked Woodsy las' night in Red Crick?"

Again Steve nodded.

"An' again you're claimin' to run the ranch here? An' to own it? An' to be ol' Hell-Fire's gran'son?"

"I asked you where Woods was," Packard reminded him sharply. The cook threw up his hand as if to ward off a blow.

"Whatcha yellin' in my ear for?" he moaned dismally. "Want to split my head off? Woodsy's over yonder; talkin' with a man name of Blenham. Ever hear of him?"

"Over yonder" plainly meant just across the creek where there was a little flat open space among the trees in which stood one of the larger shanties. Steve saw a stove-pipe sticking out crookedly through the shed roof; noted a thin spear of smoke. He spurred across the stream and to the timber boss's quarters.

Woods heard him and came out into the brightening morning, drawing the door closed behind him. His eyes, like the cook's, though to a lesser degree, showed indica-

tions of a wild night in town. Steve guessed that he hadn't undressed all night; that he was not entirely sober just now, though he carried himself steadily and spoke well enough.

"I thought you'd show," said Woods quietly, his big hands down in his pockets, his shoulders against the wall.

"What is Blenham doing here?" Steve asked.

Woods narrowed his eyes in a speculative frown.

"He's — near dead. He's waitin' for me to get one of the boys to hitch up an' haul him to a doctor. He says you an' two other guys gouged his eye out for him."

"He's a liar," announced Packard angrily. "The thing was an accident. It was a fair fight between him and Bill Royce. Blenham fell on an old spur. I promised you I'd be here this morning, Woods."

"Yes," said Woods. "I expected you."

"You were square with me last night," went on Packard quietly. "I appreciate the fact. If ever I can do you a favor, just say so. So much for that part of it. Next: Maybe you've heard I'm the owner of Ranch Number Ten? And that I'm running it myself? I've come over to tell you this morning that we're knocking off work here. I don't want any more timber down."

There came a little twitching at the corner of Woods' broad mouth. He made no answer.

"Hear me?" snapped Steve.

"Sure I hear you," said Woods insolently. "So does Blenham; he's right inside where he can hear. I guess it's him you want to talk with. I'm takin' my orders off'n Blenham an' nobody else."

"I've talked already with Blenham. I've told him not to set his hoofs on my ranch again after today. Since he's pretty badly hurt I'll let you haul him to the doctor, but I don't want him hauled back. Further, I want work stopped here right now. The men will be having breakfast in a few minutes. After breakfast you can explain to them and let them go."

Woods shrugged.

"My orders, hot out'n Blenham's mouth, is to stick on the job here an' saw wood," he said colorlessly. "I'm takin' my pay off'n him an' I'm doin' what he says."

There seemed only a careless indifference in his gesture as he partly turned his back,

staring up-stream; but the slight movement served to show Packard that Woods carried a gun on his hip, in plain sight. Well, Woods himself had said—"I expected you!"

LAST night and for a definite purpose Steve had armed himself; this morning, setting out on this errand, he had tossed the revolver into a table drawer at the ranch-house. He had never been a gunman; if circumstance dictated that he must go armed, well and good. But his brows contracted angrily at the display of Woods' readiness for gun-play.

"Look here, you Joe Woods!" he cried out. "And listen, too, you Blenham! I'm no trouble-seeker; I know it's a dead easy thing to start a row that will see more than one man dead before it's ended, and what's the use? But I mean to have what is mine in spite of you and Hell-Fire Packard and the devil! The right of the whole deal is as plain as one and one: This is my outfit, if it is mortgaged; nobody excepting me has any business ordering my timber cut. And I say that it's not going to be cut. If there is any trouble it's up to you fellows."

From Blenham in the cabin came no sound; Woods, having glanced swiftly at Packard's angry face, again stared up-stream.

For a little Steve Packard gnawed at his lip, caught in an eddy of helpless rage. Never an answer from Blenham, never an answer from Woods; angry already their silences maddened him. Across the creek he saw the cook standing in his kitchen-door, listening and smiling in sickly fashion; two or three of the men, coming out for their breakfasts, were watching him.

They were an ugly, red-eyed bunch, he thought as he swept them with his flashing eyes; they'd fight like dogs for the joy of fighting; soon or late, if Blenham persisted, he'd have the job on his hands of throwing them off his land. Of course he could go "higher up;" he could appeal to his grandfather.

He could, but in his present mood he had no intention of doing any such thing. His grandfather, before now, should have withdrawn these men.

"Don't ask me to hold my hand!" the old man shouted at him. "I'm goin' after you tooth an' big toe-nail!"

Well, if the old man wanted trouble and range war—

His blood was rushing swift and hot through his veins; his mind working feverishly. One man alone against the crowd of them, he could do nothing. But he could ride back to the ranch, gather up a dozen men, put guns into their hands, be back here in the matter of a couple of hours.

He saw the timberjacks as one by one they came out into the clearing by the cook's shack; counted them as they went in. The thought of a morning cup of coffee was attracting them; among the faces turned briefly his way he recognized several he had seen last night in the Ace of Diamonds saloon. He saw two of them hitching up the big wagon, evidently the only conveyance in the camp. They were getting ready to take Blenham.

Suddenly a new light flashed into Steve's eyes; he turned his head abruptly that Joe Woods should not see.

"How many men have you got here, Woods?" he asked.

Wondering at the question Woods answered it:

"Fourteen; startin' a new camp across the ridge."

Steve had counted nine men go into the cook's shed; with the cook there were ten; the two with the horses made twelve. There should be two more. He waited. Meanwhile, secretly so that Woods might not guess what he was doing or see the busy hand, he loosened his latigo, seeming merely to slouch in his saddle; while he made a half-dozen random remarks which set Woods wondering still further, he got his cinch loose. Another man had gone into the kitchen. Thirteen.

"Fourteen counting you?" he asked Woods.

"Yes."

Then they were all accounted for; two with the horses; eleven in the shed; Joe Woods in front of him.

"My cinch is loose," said Packard and dismounted, throwing the stirrup up across the saddle out of his way, his fingers going to the latigo which he had just loosened.

Woods watched him idly. Then suddenly both men looked toward the kitchen. The door had been slammed shut; there was a fairly hideous racket as of all of the cook's pots and pans falling together; after it a boom of laughter, and finally the cook's voice lifted querulously. Woods grinned.

unruffled by Packard's presence he said casually:

"Cookie mos' usually has the — of a head after a night like las' night. The boys knows it an' has a little fun with him!"

The two men harnessing the horses had evidently guessed as did Woods what was happening in the cook's domain; at any rate, they hastily tied the horses and hurried to see. Packard, still busied with his latigo, saw them and watched them until the door had shut behind them.

His horse stood between him and Woods. He tickled the animal in the flank; it spun about, drawing back, plunging, drawing Woods' eyes. And the next thing which Woods clearly understood was that Steve Packard was upon him, that one of Packard's hands was at his throat, that the other had gone for the gun on Woods' hip and had gotten it.

"I'll be —!" muttered Woods.

"Back into your shack!" commanded Packard, jabbing the muzzle of Woods' big automatic hard into Woods' ribs. "Quick!"

To himself just now Steve had said, "One man against the crowd of them, he could do nothing!" Just exactly what Woods would be thinking; what Blenham inside would be thinking; just exactly what the rest of the men thought since they turned their backs on him and forgot him in their sport of badgering the cook.

What he was doing now was what he would term, did he hear of another man attempting it, "a fool thing to do!" And yet he had told himself many a time that a man stood a fair chance to get away with the unexpected if he hit quick and hard and kept his wits about him.

Woods, taken thoroughly aback, allowed himself to be driven again into his cabin. Packard followed and closed the door. Within was Blenham, lying on Woods' bunk, his head still swathed, a half-empty whisky bottle on the floor at his side. With one watery eye he looked from one to the other of the two men bursting in on him.

"Blenham," cried Packard, standing over him while he was careful not to lose sight of Joe Woods' working face, "I want work stopped here and this crowd of men off the ranch. You heard what I said outside, didn't you?"

Blenham answered heavily:

"Woods, don't you pay no attention to what this man says. You keep your men

on the job. An' if you got another drop of whisky——"

"The bottle's where you put it," retorted Woods. "Under your pillow."

Blenham rolled on his side, slipping his hand under his pillow. All the time his one red eye shown evilly on Steve who, his wits about him, stepped back into the corner whence he might at the same time watch Woods and that hand of Blenham's which was making its stupid little play of seeking a bottle.

"Take it out by the neck, Blenham," said Steve sternly. "Take it out by the neck and pass it to me, butt end first! *Sabe?* I'm guessing the kind of drink you'd like to set up."

Blenham's one eye and Steve's two clashed; Woods watched interestedly. He even laughed as at last, with an exclamation which was as much a groan as a curse, Blenham jerked out his gun and flung it down on his quilt. Steve took it up and shoved it into his pocket.

"There's jus' a han'ful of men over to the cook-house," said Woods humorously. "Havin' stuck up me an' Blenham you oughtn't to have no trouble over there!"

"How many men?" demanded Steve quietly. "Thirteen, if I counted right, eh, Woods? That's no kind of a number to pin your hopes on! And now listen; I'll cut it short: If there is any trouble this morning, if any man gets hurt, remember that this is my land, that you jaspers are trespassing, that I am simply defending my property. In other words, you're in wrong. You'll be skating on —— thin ice if you just plead later on that you were obeying orders from Blenham; follow Blenham long enough and you'll get to the pen. Now, I'm going outside. You and Blenham stay in here until I call for you. I'll shut the door; you leave it shut. Take time to roll yourself a smoke and think things over before you start anything, Joe Woods."

Then swiftly he had whipped open the door, stepped out, snapped it shut after him.

"I'm taking a chance," he muttered, his eyes hard, his jaw set and thrust forward. "A good long chance. But that's the way to play the game anyhow!"

THE door of the cook's shed, facing him from across the creek, was still closed. Steve moved a dozen paces down stream; now he could command Woods'

cabin with the tail of his eye, look straight into the kitchen when the door opened, keep an eye upon the one little square window.

"It's all in the cards," he told himself grimly. "A man can win a jack pot on a pair of deuces, if he plays the game right!"

At this point Packard's Creek is narrow; the distance between the spot where he stood and the door of the cook shed was not over forty feet. He shifted Woods' gun to his left hand, taking into his right Blenham's old-style revolver which was more to his fancy. Then, to get matters under way in as emphatic a manner as he knew how, he sent a bullet crashing through the cook's roof.

The murmur of voices died away suddenly; it was intensely still for a moment; then there was a scrambling, a scraping of heavy boots and dragging benches and the cook's door snapped back against the outside wall, the opening filled with hulking forms as men crowded to see what was happening. What they saw was the nose of Blenham's gun in Steve's hand.

"Back up there," shouted Packard. "Stand still while you listen to me."

They hesitated, wondering. A man growled something, his voice deep-throated and truculent. Another man laughed. The forms filling the doorway began a slow bulging outward as other forms behind crowded upon them.

Within Woods' cabin there was a little noise.

"You men are leaving today," said Steve hastily. "Just as fast as you can pull your freight. Blenham and Woods are going with you. All told there are above a dozen of you and only one of me. But I've got Woods' gun and Blenham's and I happen to mean business. This is my outfit; if you fellows start anything and there is trouble, why you're on the wrong side of the fence. Besides, you're apt to get hurt. Blenham and Woods are quitting cold; so far as I can see you boys would be a pack of fools to make more of a stand than they are doing."

The man who had laughed and who now thrust his face forward through his companions, grinned widely and announced:

"We mightn't give a —— about where Blenham an' Joe get off. But we ain't had our breakfasts yet!"

"You don't get any breakfast on my

land!" said Steve sharply, more afraid just now of having to do with good nature than with anger.

For if the dozen men there simply laughed and stepped out and dispersed his hands would be tied; he couldn't shoot down a lot of joking men and he knew it. And they would know it.

"You're on your way right now! You, there!" This to a big, stoop-shouldered young giant in the fore, blue-eyed, straw-haired, Northern-looking. "Step out this way, Sandy! And step lively."

The Northerner shrugged and looked belligerent. Steve moistened his lips.

"You can't bluff me—" began the Northerner.

And Steve knew that, having gone this far, he could not stop at bluffing. And he knew that he must not seem to hesitate.

"I can shoot as straight as most men," he said smoothly. "But sometimes I miss an inch or two at this distance. You men who don't want to take any unnecessary chances had better give Sandy a little more elbow room!"

The stoop-shouldered man squared himself a little, jerked up his head, took on a fresh air of defiance. Slowly Steve lifted the muzzle of his gun—slowly a man drew back from the Northerner, a man fell away to the right, a man drew a hasty pace back at the left. He was left standing in the middle of the open doorway. He shifted a little, doubled his fists at his sides, twisted his head.

Again a noise from Woods' cabin. Steve saw that the door had quietly opened six inches. There was a quick movement within; the door was flung wide open. Woods was standing in the opening, a rifle in his hands, the barrel trained on Steve's chest. Steve saw the look in Woods' eye, whirled and fired first. The rifle bullet cut whistling high through the air; Woods dropped the rifle and reeled and went down under the impact of a leaden missile from a .45 caliber revolver. The rifle lay just outside now.

The squat young giant with the blue eyes and shock head of hair had not stirred. His mouth was open; his face was stupidly expressionless.

"Throw up your hands and step outside!" Steve called to him roughly.

The man started, looked swiftly about him, stepped forward, lifting his big hands.

They were still clenched but opened slowly and loosely as they went above his head.

"Turn your back this way," commanded Steve, feeling his mastery of the moment and knowing that he must drive his advantage swiftly. "Belly to the wall. That's it. Next!"

A man, the man who had twice laughed, stepped forward eagerly. He needed no invitation to lift his hands, nor yet to go to the other's side, his face to the wall. His eyes were bulging a little; they were fixed not on Steve Packard but on the body of Joe Woods. The timber boss lay across the threshold, half in, half out, twisting a little where he lay.

Now, one after another, speaking in low voices or not at all, the timber crew came out into the stillness of the new day. Steve counted them as they appeared, always keeping the tail of his eye on Woods' door, always realizing that Blenham was still to be dealt with, always watchful of the small square window in the cook's shed. Once he saw a face there; he called out warningly and the face hastily withdrew.

At last they were outside, thirteen men with their backs to him, their hands lifted. Stepping backward Steve went to Woods' cabin.

"Come out, Blenham," he called curtly.

Blenham cursed him but came. Stepping over Woods' body he said threateningly:

"Killed him, have you? You'll swing for that."

"Stand where you are, Blenham." He wondered dully if he had killed Woods? He considered the matter almost impersonally just now; the game wasn't yet played, cards were out, the mind must be cool, the eye quick. "You two boys on the end come over here and help me with Woods."

Again Woods' big body twisted; it even turned half over now and Woods sat up. His hand went to his shoulder; Steve saw the hand go red. Woods' face was white and drawn with pain. His eyes went to the rifle at his feet. Steve stepped forward, took the thing up, tossed it back into the cabin. Woods swayed, pitched a little forward, caught himself, steadied himself with a hand on the door jamb and shakily drew himself to his feet. Steve marveled at him.

"If you like, Woods," he said quietly,

"I'll have you taken over to my place and will send for a doctor for you."

"Aw, —, I ain't hurt bad," said Woods.

Steve saw how his brows contracted as he spoke. The red hand was laid rather hurriedly on the shoulder of one of the two men whom Steve had summoned across the creek.

Blenham turned away and went downstream, toward the big wagon. Woods followed, walking slowly and painfully, leaning now and again on his support.

As Steve called to them the men lined up along the wall of the cook's shed, turned and, their hands still lifted, went downstream. One after another they climbed up into the wagon. Two or three laughed; for the most part there were only black faces and growing anger. Many of them had drunk much and slept little last night; not a man of them but missed his coffee.

Packard caught up his horse's reins and swung into the saddle, calling out:

"I don't know anything you're waiting for. Climb into the seat, somebody. Get started. Blenham and Woods both need a doctor. And you needn't come back for anything you left; I'll have all your junk boxed and hauled into Red Creek this afternoon."

A man gathered up the four reins and climbed to the high seat. The brake was snapped back, the horses danced, set their necks into their collars and the wheels turned. Behind them Steve Packard, still watchful, rode to escort them to a satisfactory distance beyond the border of his property.

TERRY TEMPLE, out in front of the dilapidated Temple home, was amusing herself with a pair of field-glasses. Her big wolf-hound had just temporarily laid aside his customary dignity and was chasing a rabbit. Terry had her binoculars focused on a distant field, curious as to the outcome.

Suddenly she lost this interest. Far down the road she glimpsed a big wagon; it was filled with standing men. She altered her focus.

"Dad! she called quickly. "Oh, dad! Come here!"

Her father came out on the porch.

"What do you want?" he asked irritably.

Terry came running to him, flushed with

her excitement, and shoved the glasses up to his eyes. Temple dodged, fussed with the focusing apparatus, lowered the glasses and blinked down the road.

"It's just a wagon, ain't it?" he demanded. "Looks like——"

Again she snatched the binoculars.

"A lot of men are standing up," she announced. "That's the team from the Packard logging-camp. There's a man sitting on the front seat with the driver and he's got a rag around his head. There's some sort of a bed made up in the bottom of the wagon; a man's lying down. I actually believe, Dad Temple——"

She broke off in a strange little gasp. Behind the wagon a man rode on horseback; the sun glinted on a revolver in his hand. They came closer.

"It's Blenham on the front seat with a bandage around his head!" she cried. "He's hurt! And—dad, that man back there is Steve Packard! And he's driving that crowd off his ranch, as sure as you are Jim Temple and I'm Teresa Arriega Temple!"

Temple started, demanded—

"What's that?" with a genuine show of interest.

Together they stared down the road. On came the wagon and the rider behind it. Slowly the look in Terry's eyes altered. In a moment they were fairly dancing. And then, causing her father to stare at her curiously, she broke out into peal after peal of delicious laughter.

"Steve Packard," she cried out, her exclamation meant for her own ears alone and reaching no farther than those of her newly-imported Japanese cook who was peering out of his kitchen-window just behind her, "I believe you're a white man after all! And a gentleman and a sport! Dad, he's nabbed the whole crowd of them and put them on the run. By glory, it looks to me like a man has turned up! Maybe he was telling me the truth last night."

The wagon came on, drew abreast of the Temple gate, passed by. Temple stared in what looked like consternation. Steve, following the wagon, came abreast of the gate, stopped, watched the four horses draw their freight around the next bend in the road, accounted his work done and turned toward the Temples.

"Good morning," he called cheerily,

highly content with life just as this moment.
"Fine day, isn't it?"

Terry looked at him coolly. Then she turned her back and went into the house. Iki, the new cook, looked at her wonderingly.

"To me it appears most probable cer-

tain," said the astute Oriental within his soul, "that inhabitants of these wilderness places have much madness within their brains."

Steve swung his horse back into the road and set his face toward his own ranch.

"Darn the girl," he muttered.

TO BE CONTINUED

SERVICE STRIPES

by Berton Braley

WHEN she was new and splendid, all gleaming white and gold,
With millionaires upon her decks and baggage in her hold,
The fishing captains swore at her, the skippers of the tramps
Shook horny fists in passing and damned her glittering lamps;
"A bloomin' purse-proud autocrat," they called her in their wrath,
"That thinks she owns the right of way along the ocean path."
And then—the war-clouds filled the sky, a vast and crimson blur,
And workmen took this lady fair and strangely altered her.

Her ports were sealed and painted and guns set fore and aft,
Her sides were wildly camouflaged with weird and cunning craft,
And in her sumptuous smoking-rooms and dining-rooms de luxe
Which once had sheltered plutocrats and baronets and dukes,
The dusty brown of khaki cloth was all that met the gaze—
The garb of grim adventurers who sought the conflict's blaze;
From upper deck to lower deck, from stem to throbbing stern
Were soldiers, soldiers khaki-clad wherever one might turn.

And now the war is over, she's white and gold again,
But captains of the dingy tramps and grizzled fishermen
Salute her as she races by. "The beauty!" So they say,
"She sure has won her service stripes, so give her right of way!
A thoroughbred, that lady, and lookut how she runs,
No wonder that she gave the laugh to all the bloomin' Huns!
The Liner she's a Lady, but a Lady true an' brave
An' we drops our colors to her as she shoots along the wave!"

JUSTICE

By
Clyde B. Hough



Author of "Rescued," "Head-Hunters and Gold," etc.

TIM DORGAN was a longshoreman. For four years he had been the unwhipped terror of the San Francisco water-front and during that time he had never let pass a single opportunity to fight. At last, however, the time came when fights were not to be had. The supply of opponents was exhausted and Tim, like Alexander, sighed vainly for more worlds to conquer. Then one morning Tim saw a stranger on the water-front and, assuming that the man did not know him, concluded that here was a chance for a fight. This man was a giant—a tow-headed giant. Tim liked to fight giants; he said they made a "decent thud" when they fell.

The stranger's name was Chris Rundgen and he was driving a big four-horse truck. He was in the act of starting his horses when Dorgan deliberately pulled his own hand-truck in front of the team and stopped. He had expected the teamster to pull his horses back on their haunches, jam his foot down on the brake and swear. It was then that Tim intended to start in and either cower the man with words or, if the other was foolish enough to fight, whip him with his fists.

Chris Rundgen did not stop his horses. He looked straight at Dorgan and let the horses go. In fact he urged them on

and Dorgan had to jump aside, lively, too, or be ridden down.

Now, Tim did not fancy the spectacle he would make dodging like an excited hen before the straining, plunging horses. Besides, his plan had been completely upset, and he was furious. As soon as he was clear of the team, he began hurling vile abuse and insulting names at the big, tow-headed teamster.

Very quietly and very coolly the tow-headed one stopped his team, speaking to the horses evenly and low, wrapped the lines around the whip-staff and climbed down to the wharf. The two men faced each other. The teamster had not yet spoken one word to Dorgan.

The big longshoreman shuffled in closer, his fists clinched and drawn back, one at each side, with no guard at all. Rundgen merely slipped his right foot back a few inches and waited till Dorgan was on the point of springing. Then his right fist landed on Tim's left temple.

Dorgan had not seen any movement on the part of Chris, yet something had hit him and his mind was all shaken up. He found himself wondering if a ship had rammed the pier and at the same time struck him on the temple.

Suddenly his opponent's left fist shot out and popped Dorgan just above the right eye. Instantly Tim knew he would have a black eye and he began to think of the damage to his reputation. Some-

how his mind was not on the man in front of him. He simply could not credit the fact that there was a man hammering him.

These thoughts, however, did not take up the time it takes to tell them. They flashed like sparks from a live wire. The man's fists flashed equally as fast and before three seconds had passed a third blow—a right swing—landed on the point of Dorgan's jaw. On the side of his face, he slid along the wharf a few feet and stopped—out.

In less than two minutes after he had got down from the seat on his wagon, Chris climbed up again and drove away. He had not spoken one word, except to his horses.

When the news that Tim Dorgan had been whipped ran along the water-front, the longshoremen merely grinned and shook their heads. However, the rumor persisted and men became curious. Some of them dropped their hand-trucks and sneaked over to pier seventeen, where the miracle was said to have taken place. Before the first of these had arrived, Dorgan was on his feet and demanding of the crowd:

"What ye yaps gapin' at anyway? If ye think I've gone back er somethin', jest any four of ye step out here an' I'll break the bones of ye ter show ye that I'm as good as ever."

Dorgan had a large knot on one temple, a fast-closing eye, a rapidly swelling jaw and the skin was mostly torn off his cheek where it had scraped along the wharf. The doubters no longer doubted that Tim had been whipped. Yet none of them, not even any four of them, cared to accept his challenge; there were tough characters present, too.

Seeing that no one was inclined to fight, Dorgan walked over to a thirty-two-gallon barrel of olive oil—it was expensive—imported from Italy—hooked his big, blunt fingers under the stays, one hand at each end, and raised the barrel till it was above his head, both his arms straight. Then he let the thing down till it almost touched the floor of the wharf, raised it again high above his head and heaved it into the bay.

This was sheer bravado, cheap show, of course, but it would gain notoriety, and to Dorgan notoriety was the salt of existence.

When the barrel of oil struck the water, Dorgan turned to the captain of the *Sea Belle*, on whose manifest the oil was listed, and said:

"If ye wanta have me pinched fer that an' kin find a cop fool 'nough ter try it, tell 'im I'm 'cross the street in Mike's place."

With that he turned and strutted across East Street to the saloon he had named.

The skipper of the *Sea Belle* made no attempt to have Dorgan arrested, but busied himself with getting his barrel of olive oil back on the wharf.

When Dorgan walked through the swinging doors of Mike's place, the bartender looked at Tim's battered face, blinked a couple of times, stifled an exclamation and, under pretense of arranging bottles beneath the bar, made sure that a certain large revolver was where it could be reached quickly.

"Gimme licker!" snapped Dorgan as he walked to a cheap pine table and sat down.

The bartender would have liked to ask questions but he knew Dorgan. He gathered up a glass, a siphon and a bottle of whisky and took them across to the table. He knew better than to offer Dorgan just one drink. The whisky bottle, an ordinary short-quart bar bottle, was about two-thirds full. Dorgan drank till the bottle was empty, paid his bill at the bar, walked to the ferry and caught a Hayes Street car.

MARY DORGAN was washing a front window when she saw her husband get off the car at the corner of Octavia and Hayes Streets. It was about eleven o'clock and Mrs. Dorgan knew that something was wrong. Not that Tim was drunk or even showed signs of the liquor he had taken, but the hour was unusual and, besides, there was something devilish in the cant of Tim's head. Mary Dorgan shivered involuntarily: Tim was a heavy-handed husband. She opened the door and stood back as he entered.

He slammed the door after him and without a word peeled off his coat and threw it on the bed. Tim's wife noticed his disfigured face and inwardly gasped, but, like the bartender, she knew better

than to ask questions. Tim went in the kitchen and began looking for food.

"There's nothing ready yet," Mary called in a conciliatory voice. "I didn't expect you home in the middle of the day."

"What is it ye've been doin' all mornin'?" demanded Tim. "Gabbin' over the back fence? I know widout askin'."

By that time he was back in the front room where Mary was at work.

"Drop yer rags," he ordered, "an' git me dinner."

"I'll have this window finished in just a minute more, Timmy dear," she answered.

Two great strides and Dorgan was standing beside the chair on which she was perched. His right hand painfully grasping her shoulder brought her to the floor. His left hand shot up and blunt fingers closed like the jaws of a beast on her throat. Then, holding her in front of him, he shoved her across the room and flung her on the bed, unconscious.

For several minutes Mary Dorgan lay as if she were dead, and Tim began to fear. Then her body shook slightly. That was a shiver of the repulsion which pervaded her when consciousness returned and she realized her humiliation. She sat up on the bed and glared at Dorgan, her soul looking through her eyes, a concentrated atom of hate. Mary was beyond the clutch of fear now. So fierce was her look that Dorgan, brute though he was, wavered before it.

She rose weakly, her face white with rage, and walked to the mirror. Already there were great welts like puffy, black worms just under the white skin. Dorgan had struck his wife before but never had he marked her like that. Now, as she beheld her abused, degraded flesh, her rage turned to fixed, deadly hate. She prayed aloud.

"O God," she pleaded, "strike off the hand he choked me with."

Her intensity and earnestness were consuming and her voice transcended its human quality. It awed Dorgan but he did not know why. He could not describe the feeling. Had he tried to express it, he would have said--

"She talks like God."

He looked at his left hand—the one that had so recently been at his wife's throat—and, for an instant, shuddered in fear. Superstition was deep-rooted in Tim. He had inherited it from a hundred Celtic generations, but the devil soon came to his aid and Tim laughed a hard laugh, walked to a drawer where Mary kept the money she had saved out of what he gave her of his weekly earnings, took the money and jammed it in his pocket.

"I'm leavin' ye," he snarled.

He threw some clothes and a few other things into a suitcase and walked out.

The thing that was really tormenting Dorgan was his lost prestige on the water-front. The fact that he had been whipped was known the length and breadth of East Street, and he did not have the courage to work day after day with those who knew it. That night he took a train for Seattle.

SIX months after Tim Dorgan arrived in Seattle, he had changed from a swaggering, bold bully to a morose, furtive man with the look of a hunted criminal in his eyes. But no man had thus broken Tim's spirit. It was the nightly ringing in his ears of Mary Dorgan's prayer:

"O God, strike off the hand he choked me with."

Each night, in the darkness of his room, the voice of Mary Dorgan rang back across the lapse of six months so clearly that Tim could see her with face thrown up and eyes ablaze with indignation. And now, as then, it was not her words that harried him, but the earnest tone, an earnestness that somehow transcended the mere human and made her voice sound like the pronouncement of doom. The deep-rooted Celtic superstition was riding Tim hard.

At this time news of rich gold-findings in Alaska swept over the country, and Tim Dorgan, hearing the tales of gold and the wildness of the snow-clad North, determined to go. Perhaps here was a land where a man might lose himself, even elude the pursuing voice of Mary Dorgan crying in the night. So thought Tim in his ignorance, for he knew nothing of the heavy silence, the white deso-

lation and the vast emptiness of Alaskan Winter.

While Dorgan, in Seattle, was getting ready to venture into the land of long nights, Chris Rundgen, in San Francisco, was also making the same preparations. Chris had prospected for several years in California, and when he heard the news of the big strike in Alaska it set the old fire flaming in his blood again.

II

WHEN the first boat up the Yukon in 1896 tied up at Fortymile, four men from San Francisco were among the first dozen who came down the gang-plank. They were Tim Dorgan, Chris Rundgen, Ed Winston and Pete Ledermann. These four were not together, that is, not in the sense of partners, or even particular friends. Dorgan and Rundgen had started to fight—or rather Dorgan had started it—soon after the boat left Seattle, but Winston stopped the affair before either man had the best of it. He persuaded the two to shake hands and since then they had observed a strained sort of truce.

Perhaps the fact that Rundgen knew a lot about mining played some part in Tim's attitude. Not that he asked any questions, but he listened closely when Chris told Winston of his Sierra experiences. As for Rundgen, he was no bully and was willing enough to be friends.

Dorgan and Rundgen both knew that Winston was a newspaper man who had quit that work to search for gold in Alaska, and they liked him. He was a big fellow—almost as big as either of the other two—good-naturedly brusque and outspoken. Of the fourth man, Pete Ledermann, none of the other three knew anything. He was from San Francisco, and that fact was at the bottom of his acquaintance and association with them.

The truth about Ledermann is short and ugly. He had been an habitu   of the Barbary Coast, a bouncer in a dance-hall, had hit some drunk too hard—with a "sap," of course—and had disappeared between two suns.

At Fortymile, Ledermann decided that the dance-halls were more lucrative and more to his liking than the digging and

washing of dirt, so he prospected for a job tending bar and made a strike.

The other three made up their packs at once and set out. Each carried a pack of ninety pounds, thirty pounds of tools and utensils and sixty pounds of grub.

The three men from San Francisco were not alone when they hiked out of Fortymile. There were scores and scores of others—embryo miners all, new to the country—swarming like ants from rim to rim of the narrow valley, down the center of which wended a small river. This river flowed from the northeast and emptied into the Yukon a few hundred yards down stream from Fortymile. There was no trail and, beyond the fact that this multitude of men kept within the confines of the valley and followed the general course of the river toward its source, there was no organization among them.

Rundgen, Winston and Dorgan, however, were far in advance of all the others. This was partly due to the tremendous size and strength of the three men—there was scarcely a man behind so large as either of them—and partly to the fact that, unlike the others, they did not stop to ease off their packs and rest. It was Summer-time in Alaska, and they often slipped on the green moss and, sometimes, powerful men as they were, they went to their knees under the lurching weight of their packs.

The crowd had left Fortymile that morning at four o'clock, an hour after daylight, and not until noon did the three big men ease off their packs, lean back against them and eat cold the sandwiches which they had prepared before leaving Fortymile. The line behind them, flung across the valley more than a mile long, crawled and struggled and slipped and fell like toiling ants.

Thirty minutes passed. Chris slipped his arms through the straps of his ninety-pound burden and rose without a word. The other two also rose with the packs in place. Not till eight o'clock in the evening did they stop again. The struggling ant-line was miles behind them now, sprawled by fires that wavered palely in the last glow of the blood-red sun.

There was no conversation for Rundgen and his companions that night.

They swallowed their food, pulled their blankets over them and fell asleep. For twelve hours not one of them stirred a muscle; then they awoke. And what an awakening!

The day before, they had covered thirty-five miles under ninety-pound packs. Their backs were raw from the rubbing of the packs. Their muscles were so sore that they hurt like exposed nerves.

Chris turned over under his blanket, drew up his legs to rise, but the big tendons at the back of his knees knotted. He grabbed one leg at the ankle and pulled with all of his strength to straighten it out. The other two men suffered even more than Rundgen from the cramps. It had been the one night that Tim had not heard the voice of Mary Dorgan.

With smothered groans and muttered oaths they finally managed their breakfast. They ate but little, swore much, rubbed their legs and arms, shouldered their packs and traveled again till noon. Then they stopped. One o'clock came and Rundgen, the accepted leader of the trio, still lay stretched on the ground, face down. He showed no inclination to resume the hike and the other two were glad. Had Chris risen and gone on they would have followed as a matter of pride, but as long as he stayed down, they also could stay down without shame.

About four o'clock that afternoon Winston got out his shovel, cleared away the moss a few feet from his pack, threw some dirt in his pan, climbed down to the stream and started washing. After a few minutes he came running back to Tim and Chris, as lithe as a schoolboy, his sore muscles and blistered back utterly forgotten. Chris and Tim looked on the bottom of Winston's gold-pan and sprang to their feet, their aches and pains also forgotten.

They fingered the yellow flakes and, out of his experience, Chris estimated that the pan would run at least two dollars and a half. They looked at each other and laughed like silly little girls.

Tim Dorgan forgot that Chris Rundgen had once knocked him out on pier seventeen in San Francisco, and all three of them, unmindful of pain, mauled each other on raw, blistered shoulders. They

clasped hands and danced around in a circle. Then they stopped and, at a motion from Winston, followed him to the bank of the small stream which he very solemnly christened "Little Lucky River."

In the forenoon of the next day all of the crowd behind, except those who had given up and turned back, caught up with Rundgen and his companions and, for a radius of five miles around Discovery Claim, which was Winston's, they staked.

For a while the earth fairly vibrated under the combined thud of picks, and Little Lucky River was dark and turgid with muck from swinging pans. One by one, however, the claims proved to have absolutely no gold on them, or so little that it was not worth while. And, one by one, the men left till, in the end, there were only five locations worth working. Each of these turned out a fortune.

The five rich claims lay side by side. Taking them as they came, from west to east, the first one belonged to "Pop" Ward, a grizzled old sourdough who came up after the strike and bought what looked, on the surface, like a worthless bit of ground. But Pop was gambling on a bed-rock deposit and Pop had been in the country long enough to know a thing or two. The next claim to Pop's belonged to Winston, the third to Rundgen, and the fourth and fifth to Dorgan. Tim had bought the fifth claim for the price of a ticket from Fortymile to Seattle.

For six weeks after the last man, except Ward, Winston, Rundgen and Dorgan, had gone, these four worked their claims and lived on grub they had bought from those who went back to Fortymile.

The gold they took out during these six weeks was not as much as Winston's first pan led them to expect; still they each found enough dust in their sluice-boxes from evening to evening to make them feel a warm glow inside. Tim failed to hear the voice of Mary Dorgan and forgot the specter of her tense, white face.

BY the end of September their food ran low and they arranged for a trip to Fortymile to bring up grub, tools and the necessary clothes for Winter. Winston volunteered to stay behind as guard,

and next morning the other three started early with an extra day's rations, for they intended to examine Little Lucky River all the way to its mouth. They planned to pole the supplies up-river in small boats. Their explorations showed the plan to be feasible, although they found shoals about seven miles below camp which would necessitate portage.

The three men from Little Lucky River had to remain in Fortymile until the long, shallow poling-boats could be built, and it was while there that Rundgen met Pete Ledermann. Ledermann was broke and with the face peculiar to his kind asked Chris to grub-stake him, presuming, of course, on their slight acquaintance during the voyage up.

"See Dorgan," Chris told him. "He's got an extra claim and he's looking for a man to help him work it. Think you'll find him in the Aurora Saloon."

LEDERMANN hurried away toward the Aurora but did not go in. Instead, he waited on the opposite side of the street until Dorgan came out.

"Shore," answered Dorgan when Ledermann said he had heard that the other wanted to hire a man. "Come an' have a drink an' we'll talk it over."

"I'm not drinkin'," said Ledermann.

"Not drinkin'!" exclaimed Tim. "Must 've quit sudden. Ye punished 'nough of it on the boat comin' up."

Ledermann said nothing. He could not tell Tim that he had been caught trying to rob a dance-hall girl in the saloon where he served drinks, that he had been beaten and kicked out bodily, that it was as much as his life was worth to be seen inside of any saloon in Fortymile. No, these were facts that he must keep to himself and of which he hoped Dorgan would not hear.

"Well," continued Tim when it was evident that the other did not intend to answer his last remark, "I guess yer ain't quit eatin'. It's about noon an' I'm hungry. Let's go ter a restaurant an' we can talk while we're eatin'."

They went to a restaurant and there Tim paid the bill and hired Ledermann to work for him. Right here seems a

good place to say that neither Tim, Chris nor Pop Ward ever heard the real reason for Ledermann's leaving town. This was probably due to the fact that Fortymile, in 1896, was made up of thousands of men, all strangers to each other and all with bigger things than petty crooks to think about.

In three days the four boats—there was an extra one for Winston—were ready for the water. They were promptly launched on the Yukon and loaded with supplies. This was in the evening and, at five o'clock next morning, the four men, with Pop Ward in the lead on account of his experience, entered the mouth of Little Lucky River and started poling for their gold claims fifty miles up stream. Ledermann handled the boat that belonged to Winston. It was hard work, this poling heavily loaded boats against the current, and by the time they had covered thirty miles the most of a long day had been used up, so the men tied up their boats and camped for the night.

Next morning at five o'clock the four men once more started poling up Little Lucky River and by one o'clock in the afternoon they came to the shoals which they had found on the way down to Fortymile. It was an easy portage of about one hundred yards on level ground. The work was completed and everything restored on the boats in two hours. It did not take long to pole the remaining seven miles into camp.

The arrival of fresh supplies and tools was a signal to begin building. Bright new axes flashed in the sun and bit deep into standing spruce trees. White chips popped out and whirled in the air, trees fell and long, keen-toothed whip-saws purred and twanged in the soft wood. The walls of cabins began to rise, and Dan, the scarred and grizzled old malamute that belonged to Pop Ward, sat back on his haunches, his forelegs straight and stiff, his ears tilted forward, watching the work with approval. Dan knew that Winter was coming.

In a week the cabins were built, three of them with stoves in them and everything ready for the long Arctic Winter. Winston and Pop Ward lived together in one cabin, Tim and Ledermann in another and Rundgen alone in the third.

III

THE freeze-up had come. Little Lucky River was a solid bed of ice and on top of that were three feet of snow. The earth seemed blanketed in snow. Everywhere was white, glaring, never-melting snow and with it had come an eternal silence. Through the long, still nights Tim Dorgan was once more hearing the voice of his wife, Mary Dorgan, as she pleaded—

"O God, strike off the hand he choked me with."

It was one o'clock in the morning. For half an hour, Dan, the malamute, had been howling his dismal wolf-howl at regular intervals. Dorgan could stand it inside no longer. He rolled out of his bunk, pulled on his great, three-colored blanket-coat, his moccasins and fur cap, and passed out of the cabin.

With a muttered oath Tim pulled on his mittens and closed the cabin door behind him. The spirit thermometer hanging beside the door registered fifty-two below. Overhead the stars, bright as diamond points, danced and glittered while far to the north the aurora borealis flamed and reeled against the sky like a many-fingered searchlight. The three cabins, back a short distance from the stream, were deep-set in the snow, their roofs covered so that they looked like cubes of sugar.

Dorgan shouldered an ax and strode back toward the timber. In the light of the flashing aurora and a myriad stars he could be clearly seen. The three colors of his great blanket-coat, yellow about the shoulders, green at the middle and deep red at the bottom, stood out clear, picturesque in the spectral light. Dorgan was proud of that coat. There was not one other in camp like it. That night, however, he was not thinking of the coat. He had come out to work himself to exhaustion so that the imagined voice of Mary Dorgan could not arouse him. It was not the first time Dorgan had worked in the night that he might ultimately obtain sleep.

Tim reached the timber. For a brief spell he swung his ax vigorously, viciously. A spruce tree fell. It was not a large tree, perhaps eight inches through and forty or forty-five feet long. Dor-

gan raised the butt of the tree against his hip, hooked his right arm around it and, holding it thus, dragged it, boughs and all, across the snow to his claim. Here Tim trimmed and cut the tree to the length of firewood. This wood he would burn in the shaft and melt the muck and gravel. For two hours he worked, cutting down and dragging trees to the shaft. Then he went back to his cabin to sleep without hearing the voice of Mary Dorgan.

As Tim entered the cabin on his return, he awoke Ledermann and the latter swore bitterly but not audibly. He hated Dorgan. Tim had made it possible for him to get out of Fortymile, where every man was his legitimate executioner, but there was no gratitude in Ledermann's make-up.

Before coming to Little Lucky River, Pete had never done a day's work in all the twenty-eight years of his misspent life. He hated work. In his world it was a disgrace to work. According to his creed, only suckers worked. Now, because circumstances forced him to work, he hated the man who employed him. Under these same circumstances and without more reason, he would have hated any other man just as he now hated Dorgan. Ledermann had a plan to gratify his hate and at the same time make himself rich.

At seven o'clock the next morning Ledermann and Dorgan ate their breakfast by the light of the slush-lamp and, with the first coming of pale dawn, went to work in the black hole beside which Dorgan had cut and piled wood the night before.

First they would build a fire in the shaft and, when that had burned out, Ledermann would go down and shovel the few inches of thawed muck and gravel into a bucket which Dorgan would draw up by means of a crude windlass. After that another fire would be made and another few inches of dirt melted. Each bucketful was emptied on the pay-dump, where it promptly froze as hard as stone.

When Ledermann came up from the shaft at the close of that day, he looked down-stream and noticed Chris Rundgen cutting ice and packing it into his cabin. He knew that Chris was melting ice to

wash a trial pan from his pay-dump, and Pete wanted to see that trial pan, to see how much it would bring. He went into the cabin hurriedly, finished the work of supper, gulped down his food and went out while Dorgan was still eating. He rapped on Rundgen's door and was rewarded by a hearty—

"Come in."

Rundgen looked up and nodded toward a rough slab bench—an invitation for Ledermann to sit down.

It was a pan from bed-rock that Rundgen washed that night and, when the coarse gold and nuggets were finally weighed, there was a fraction over two ounces. Gold, at that time in Alaska, was reckoned at sixteen dollars to the ounce. Rundgen had taken approximately thirty-five dollars out of that one pan. Chris poured the gold into a sack as Ledermann watched with bright, narrowed eyes. In that instant a new variation was added to his original plan.

Ledermann slept even less that night than did Dorgan in the bunk across from him. For, while Tim, with closed eyes, was staring at the white, tense face of Mary Dorgan, Ledermann was figuring and weighing his new plan. Not until Tim had gone out and cut timber for the next day's burning and had come back again did Ledermann finally close his eyes and sleep.

After that night in Rundgen's cabin, when Ledermann saw the other wash thirty-five dollars from one pan, the days ran into weeks without event, and the dump piles grew larger. Night after night Dorgan left his bunk, went out into the starlit expanse of snow and timber and worked himself to a state of exhaustion so that he could sleep.

Months passed and the sun came back from the Southland and smiled a gentle warmth on the snowbound North. The snow melted, and once more the patches and tussocks of moss were green under foot. Here and there, where a long willow clung to the bank of the stream, buds shot out and small life began to creep and wriggle.

Finally the ice broke, jamming and crunching against the bank, and started on its way down to the Yukon, and Little Lucky River was once more yellow with mud from the sluice-boxes. The

camp buzzed and hummed with hurry and excitement.

Even Tim Dorgan came out of his apathy and worked in feverish excitement. He hung his great three-colored coat on a peg in the cabin wall, left off his high German socks, stripped down to one suit of underwear and one pair of overalls, rolled up his sleeves and worked from dawn to dark, the muscles and cords of his arms and the tendons in his neck bulging and playing like tautened ropes in a tackle. Tim heard no voice in the nights following these days, but slept, undisturbed, from dark to dawn. A few weeks of Spring weather, of the stir and life that it brings, and the daily sight of yellow gold, had healed his diseased imagination.

More days passed and the work of the clean-up was finished. The boats were taken from their caches and moored on the stream, ready for the voyage to Fortymile, which was to begin with daylight the next morning. The long twilight dimmed to a wan sort of night, and the men in their cabins packed their gold and made it ready for transportation down Little Lucky River.

Winston, totalling up his separate weighing of each day, found that he had three hundred and thirty-four pounds of gold worth, at a rough estimate, sixty-five thousand dollars. Pop Ward's total was two hundred and nine pounds, about forty thousand dollars, while Dorgan, with his two claims, reached the ninety thousand dollar mark. Rundgen, in the center, with but one claim, totalled four hundred and sixteen pounds of coarse gold and nuggets—eighty thousand dollars. Chris made his gold up in four packs for convenient handling; then he extinguished the slush-lamp, rolled into his bunk and went to sleep.

IV

CHRIS RUNDGEN moved in his sleep. Something was wrong. He opened his eyes, but it was dark and he could see nothing. Yet there was something cold and small and round pressing against the side of his head. He thought to reach up and snatch it away, but a voice forestalled him.

"Don't touch it," said the voice.

"Don't move! If ye do I'll pull the trigger!"

It was a hard, grating voice—the voice of Tim Dorgan. Rundgen could have sworn to that.

"Ye had the best of me before," grated the voice, "but this time—this is my round. An' remember, one squeak out of ye—just one little wiggle—an' I'll start the fireworks."

Then Chris felt a thong with a noose to it, slipped over one of his hands. The man seemed to have had everything prepared.

"Turn over," he ordered.

Chris turned, now lying face-down in his bunk. The muzzle of the revolver was shifted to the other side of his head. Then his hands were securely bound behind him. Next a gag was jammed into his mouth and secured with a thong, and the gun was removed from his head, and his feet lashed together.

The man struck a match and lit the slush-lamp. The face was hidden by a handkerchief which hung from the bridge of the nose and fell below the chin. But that made no difference. That hat and coat could not be mistaken. It was the dingy, soiled, broad-brimmed hat which Dorgan had been wearing since Spring set in; also there was the big blanket-coat, yellow about the shoulders, green at the waist and deep red at the bottom. Rundgen wondered why Tim had taken the trouble to mask.

The man began to pack out Rundgen's gold. He carried one pack at a time, and each trip he would remain out for several minutes. This process was repeated four times and Rundgen's four hundred and sixteen pounds of gold were gone.

The man neglected to put out the light when he left the cabin. Rundgen rolled over on his back, twisted his head around until he could see the watch on the wall above his bunk. It was ten minutes past one o'clock in the morning. Dawn would not come till nearly four o'clock. The robber had given himself plenty of time for escape. Barring an accident, no one would be up till daylight to learn what had been done.

Chris ground his teeth on the gag and gave vent to his rage in a mighty heave of his powerful muscles against the

thongs that bound him. The thongs held relentlessly.

Then Chris undertook to go over the situation, but he could not think connectedly. He seemed able to realize but one thing, one overwhelming, staggering fact—that his eighty thousand dollars were gone. Then, for a few moments, Rundgen lived murder and mentally ran amuck.

AFTER a while the terrific anger passed and left Chris cold, like something burned out, and he began to think clearly, connectedly. The thongs that held him were of untanned moosehide, he knew. There was no other kind in camp.

Chris turned on to his stomach, carefully lifted his bound legs over the edge of the bunk and, holding with his bent body, laboriously let himself down till he stood with knees on the floor. He moved once or twice, perhaps an inch, then overbalanced and flopped on his side. Plainly that method would take too much time, even if he should be able to get back to a kneeling position. He turned on his stomach and began wiggling forward. It was slow work, infinitely slow and the log flooring was immensely rough and knotty. But Chris did not think much about that. His whole mind was centered on getting to a pail of water on the opposite side of the cabin in the least possible time.

Inch by inch Chris crossed the floor till, scraped and bleeding, he reached the water. Then, leaning his shoulder against the wall, he managed to struggle to his knees and to a position where he could put his hands and wrists in the pail of water. He waited and waited. He could endure the racking, twisted position no longer. To try to endure it longer was to lose control, to slump down and turn over the pail of water, and that would end his chance of getting free.

He straightened up, drew his hands out of the pail and then pulled steadily to see if the thongs would slip, but there was no give, no stretch. They had not soaked enough yet. He rested his body a little, twisted back into position and let his wrists down in the water. Again he waited what seemed to him interminable centuries. Again he took his hands out of the water. This time, when he pulled,

there was a slight giving. He pulled again, harder. The knots began to slip. As long as he could stand the pain, he strained against the thongs, then rested and strained again. It was slow, painful work but, in the end, his hands were free. Next came the gag and then his legs.

Chris stood up, elated even in his misfortune. He pulled his revolver from the holster above his bunk and examined the cartridges in the chambers, found them in proper condition, jammed the gun back in the holster, buckled the belt around his waist and went outside.

DAWN was breaking in the east. Rundgen hesitated, undecided for a moment, then turned instinctively and went toward Dorgan's cabin. He surely did not expect to find Dorgan there, yet he felt that he must go to Dorgan's cabin and there start and shape his action.

Chris shoved the door open abruptly and, when the fast-brightening daylight dispersed the gloom of the cabin, he saw Dorgan sitting on the edge of his bunk.

"Put up your hands and stand up," Rundgen ordered, thrusting out his gun.

Dorgan rose surprised, his hands up. His moccasins and socks lay under the edge of the bunk. His hair was rumpled and he actually looked as if he had just waked up. The big, three-colored blanket hung from a peg in the wall.

Rundgen noted these things and they struck him as strange, but he had not come to deal with appearances; he was in search of his gold and he had found Dorgan in the cabin. Keeping a good distance from Tim so there would be no chance for a sudden leap, Chris began to question the other.

"Dorgan," he said in a voice that showed the effort with which it was controlled, "where is my gold?"

Dorgan stared moodily at Chris for several seconds and then muttered:

"Ye — Swede! Have ye gone clean crazy?"

"Listen, Dorgan," said Rundgen, "it's no good bluffin'. You've got my gold. I know it and you know I know it."

"Ye're a liar," snapped Tim.

"If you don't tell me where my gold is," said Chris, "I'm goin' to kill you, sure. I won't kill you all at once either. So help me God, Dorgan, I'll cut you

up in pieces till you tell me where that gold is. Where is it?"

"I ain't got yer gold. Don't know anything about it. Why in — don't ye look round the place. If ye did, ye'd see soon 'nough that there's only me own gold here."

In his anger and terror at the loss of his wealth, Chris had not thought to look for the stolen gold. He had simply taken it for granted that Dorgan had hidden it somewhere outside, and, when he did examine the cabin, the result seemed to prove his theory beyond a doubt. He found only four packs, which he judged would weigh a little over a hundred pounds each. Chris knew that Tim's clean-up was about ninety thousand dollars, and the gold in the four packs, he thought, would just about run that amount. Certainly his gold was not there.

For a few minutes Chris contemplated seizing Dorgan's gold to replace his own, but he very quickly realized that to do so would be plain robbery, which would entail all manner of complications. No, men would demand more proof than his word against Dorgan's word.

Chris stepped close to Tim and his left fist shot up with a lifting movement, connecting with the point of Dorgan's jaw.

A few minutes later Dorgan regained consciousness and found himself lying on his back on the rough table in the center of the cabin, his legs hanging over one end and tied by the ankles to the legs of the table. His hands were also tied to the table, one at each side.

"I'll kill you," Chris said, "just as sure 'as you yell. I ain't goin' to gag you because I want you to talk and tell me where my gold is. If you yell, I'll kill you before anybody can get here. Now keep that in mind, and once more I ask you: Where's my gold?"

"Aw, go ter —!" answered Dorgan. "I told ye I don't know anything about it."

"All right," said Chris. "I told you I'd cut you up in pieces and so I will. When I said that a few minutes ago, I didn't mean it word for word, but now I do. It's just what such a skunk as you deserves. You're not even doin' this because you need the money. It's pure — spite. You're tryin' to get even for

that beatin' I gave you in 'Frisco, and that was all your own fault and you know it."

With that Rundgen crossed the cabin and picked up an ax which leaned against the wall beside the door. It was a heavy, broad-bitted ax. He swung it over his shoulder and went back to the table. It so happened that Chris was standing at Dorgan's left side, and Tim, watching him, saw the other was looking directly at his left hand. Undoubtedly he would strike where he looked. Tim stared at Chris, wild-eyed, but did not speak. He was fully convinced that this was a direct answer to Mary Dorgan's prayer.

"Your last chance, Dorgan," said Chris. "Where is my gold?"

Dorgan's mouth worked, but the words would not come. His throat seemed glued together and Rundgen, listening, did not see the moving lips and, hearing no sound, he swung the heavy ax down. The blood spurted and Dorgan's left hand was severed exactly across the middle of the palm.

Dorgan did not cry out; neither did he show any sign of pain. On the contrary, a relieved expression came into his eyes. It was exactly the expression of one who has carried a heavy burden far and who has been suddenly and unexpectedly relieved. Tim looked down curiously at his severed member. The thing that he had dreaded and feared and hoped against for more than a year had come upon him. The strange part was that he did not mind, that he felt relieved, felt as if he had paid an honest debt.

Rundgen stood back—cold, dispassionate, unmoved.

"That's only the beginnin'," he said. "You better tell me now."

RUNDGEN had hardly finished this statement when Pete Ledermann stepped through the cabin door. Chris heard the noise and wheeled, his gun up. To his infinite surprize he saw Winston following Ledermann, covering him with a rifle.

"I caught this coyote, here, trying to get away with all of our boats and your clean-up, Dorgan," said Winston.

As he spoke, Winston followed Ledermann inside the cabin and saw what had happened. He came close and stared

down at Dorgan's still tied and bleeding hand. He stepped back, astounded. Several times he tried to speak but failed completely. It was Dorgan himself who finally broke the awful silence.

"I'd like it if somebody put a tourniquet on me wrist ter stop the blood."

Strange as it may seem, there was no anger in his voice.

Winston was instantly on the job. No one was watching Ledermann. Winston had taken his gun away from him down the river, and Pete thought this was an opportunity to escape, so he turned and started stealthily toward the door.

"Back up!" growled Pop Ward, squinting along the barrel of his rifle.

"I saw Winston herdin' this cattle in here with his rifle," said Pop, stepping inside the cabin, "and I 'lowed somethin' was wrong, so I gathered up my own gun and trailed along."

As Pop finished speaking, Winston gave a last twist to the tourniquet on Tim's wrist, bound a clean towel about the stub of a hand, cut the thongs with which Dorgan had been tied, and straightened up.

"Rundgen," he said savagely, "what does this mean?"

By this time it had dawned on Rundgen that it was Ledermann and not Dorgan who had robbed him. He stepped back till he could reach Ledermann. His powerful right hand closed over the other's neck and shoved him forward.

"This varmint, here, can tell you," said Rundgen. "He can tell you all about it and he'd better come clean—quick, too. Tell 'em, you hound!"

Chris emphasized the last command with a vicious kick.

All of his life Ledermann had lived a bluff and, in all the fights he had ever had as bouncer and bartender, he had known that he was backed by a gang. Now he stood alone, with no gang to back him, stripped to the naked soul of him, and that was yellow. He was afraid to lie to these men. He knew that he could not make the lie ring true and he wanted to placate them, so he told the truth.

"Dorgan worked me like a dog," he whined. "I done just as much work takin' out them ninety thousand dollars as he did and all I got was wages, while

he strutted around, a rich man. I just couldn't help hatin' him for it, so I made up my mind to take his gold and get rich and get even at the same time.

"Then, one night, I went to Chris's cabin and saw him wash thirty-five dollars out of one pan. Right there I decided to take Chris's gold instead of Tim's and make Chris believe that it was Tim who'd robbed him. I knowed there was bad blood between them two and I knowed Chris would do somethin' awful if I could make him think like I wanted to. So, last night, when I went to do the job, I put on Tim's big blanket-coat and his hat and I talked like him.

"Well, it worked. You can see that, but after I'd got the gold out and on to a boat, I come back here and hung the coat and hat up in the cabin. Then I tied all the boats together and started down the river. I meant to smash all of 'em but one, at the seven-mile portage. I would 'a' smashed 'em here but that would 'a' waked up the whole camp. Then, when I got to the shoals, I found him—" jerking his head toward Winston—"waitin' for me."

"Well?" Rundgen directed this question at Winston.

"Well," echoed Winston. "Dan woke me up howling but I didn't pay any attention to it at first. But he kept it up—low, whiney howls like something was wrong, so I decided I'd get up and see what it was. As soon as I got outside and glanced around, I saw Ledermann poling down the river with all the boats in tow. I didn't take time to wake anybody—just stepped into the cabin, picked

up my rifle and cartridge belt and followed him. I knew he'd have a gun, whatever devilment he was up to, and I knew he might bring me down if he saw me. The stars and the aurora made the night just about as clear as day, so I turned out into the spruce and ran all the way to the shoals. I got there first and waited behind a tree till he stepped ashore; then I covered him with my rifle and made him put up his hands. Here he is, and your dust is out there in the boat, Rundgen."

"What'll we do with him?" asked Chris of the others, pointing to Ledermann.

"Cinch him up," said Dorgan. "We'll take him along to Fortymile and let him be tried by whatever law there is in this country."

"All right," said Winston. "You have the say."

Immediately they applied the thongs to Ledermann.

Then Rundgen turned to Tim once more.

"Dorgan," he said, "words won't do. Talk's no good here. Ain't there something I can do to square this? Anything. You can have my whole pile if that'll count any."

"Fergit it," said Dorgan. "That hand just had ter come off."

No one there knew what Dorgan meant, but that was because they knew nothing of Mary Dorgan's prayer. Nor did any one of them ever know that, the next day after he arrived in Seattle, Tim mailed Mary Dorgan a check for thirty thousand dollars.

SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT



Author of "The Devil Takes Care of His Own," "Inside and Outside," etc.

SOME fellows get into trouble as easily as a chunk of salt-water soap lathers in fresh, hot water, and with as much speed as thirty-two plunks a month takes its flight following pay-day. Some people don't believe in signs, but freckles and red hair are just about as attractive to trouble as a two-pound box of canteen chocolates at a jitney a throw would be to a bunch of gobs.

"Stormy" Jones didn't mean no harm, but he and trouble walked hand in hand, like one of them was a marine guard out to give the other an airing from the brig. Stormy could zigzag and throw out smoke screens and hook her up full ahead or slow astern, but trouble had the range of him every minute and made so many bull's-eyes that it was lucky just to be around him, so you didn't get hit yourself.

The old "Minny," she being the battle cruiser *Mynton* and as good a home as ever smelled smokeless powder, had Stormy for a signal boy, and Stormy was what one of these polite yeomanettes down at the station sprung on us as "being in arrears," having considerable more extra duty than he found time to pay off. For signal boy on a flagship is no easy job these days—catching a flyer's temperamentals on the scenery, a sub's ramblings about how it feels down below and keeping up the dignity of who's who on the top side. A signal boy could fall asleep mumbling about official rush

messages and wake up blaming the chow for giving him a headache.

The *Minny* was taking part in one of these celebrations that the coast cities away from the stations like to pull off. They call them "fiestas," and there is something doing every minute. A gob has about as much chance of getting lonesome as he does the day after he's won twenty bucks on a boat-race. This one had diving girls, hot-dog stands enough so you could smell them out to the ship and places where you could lay down a dime and maybe win a cutie doll for your Jane.

It was a swell little burg, this Rivera, about as far away from being cold and dead as a Mexican tamale is from paymaster's ice cream. A fellow could trade off a smile or two any time for an invite to dinner, and they handed around automobile rides like confetti. They had church receptions and beach teas, jazz bands and prize-fights. You could take your pick or try them all.

Stormy Jones was missing out on the whole works. All he had to do was to wear out his arms waving the flags and ruin his voice telling his striker what to write on the pad, such as:

"Code No. 3 official. Message 3640. Jig-fox-boy-item-love-Mike-rush." Or a snappy message sent by the boy-scout outfit ashore—"Mrs. Smith would be honored to have the admiral to tea on Tuesday."

It was tough luck for old Stormy. He

could see and hear about the big doings but he wasn't in it at all.

"No liberty until you work off that extra duty," the "Jimmy Legs" told him, with Stormy not having a spare minute to put in a single hour of it, and it would have taken three weeks straight to clean it up.

The gang talked so much to Stormy about the time they were having that it made him sick. Anyhow, he shows up at the sick bay after the doctor had gone ashore on the biggest night of the whole thing and gets by "Pills," the hospital apprentice, with a headache that relieves him from the night's watch. Pills makes him take a dose of something while he's right there and watching, but Stormy chokes and loses all but the taste of it. He puts on a couple of sweaters and an overcoat and sits on the fire-room grating for fifteen minutes before he goes down.

"You've got a little temperature," says Pills, feeling of him.

Stormy has run up and down the ladder two or three times so his heart would wake up and take notice.

"You'd better get in your hammock right away. Take this in a little water just before you turn in. I'll see you again in the morning."

Pills was kind of anxious to get ashore himself, passing the buck on down to the second-class apprentice under him.

Stormy got his hammock-out of the netting, unlashd and swung it and then went to show the radio gunner the relief paper he had fooled Pills into giving him. After that he went out on deck like he was heading for the scuttle-butt for a drink, peeled off his clothes and put on a bathing-suit.

This was the night there was to be bathing on the beach, under a rig of big coaling lights. The water was warm and the air still and soft. Stormy figured that the half-mile to shore and another half-mile back to the ship meant nothing in his young life, compared to the time he would have on the beach.

Watching his chance, he slipped down a boat-fall and took to the water. Soon he was making a liberty as easily as anybody, the long line of marks on his extra duty record suddenly having turned to zeros.

Stormy's plan looked so simple that it

seemed perfect. He figured to splash around awhile, harmless as could be, with the sea nymphs on the beach, mop up a couple of ice-cream sodas and then paddle on back to the ship in plenty of time to get as much sleep as a signal boy rates anyhow. The shore patrol knew he had no business ashore and would pick him up as quick as could be, were he dressed for liberty; but a bathing suit makes a mighty good disguise, and Stormy felt safe, not knowing that Old King Trouble had a stew on for him at that minute, and the stew was about done and ready to be served.

STORMY had been gone half an hour and had found a nice little girl who wanted to be taught how to ride on a surf board, when the admiral comes back to the ship and finds that the little safe in his room has been opened that afternoon while the ship was full of visitors and robbed of a handful of jewelry and most of the month's pay he's drawn the day before.

The admiral went to the bridge himself to get a quick message to the police ashore, and the apprentice boy who was snapping the blinker, considerably flustered because the admiral was flustered, got the message all balled up.

"Break out that red-headed boy," says the admiral. "He can put some speed into it."

The quartermaster takes a thump at Stormy's hammock and finds that Stormy isn't there. He also finds that Stormy isn't on the ship and his name is not on the liberty list. After the admiral gets his message through, another one goes to the officer in charge of the beach patrol to keep a sharp lookout for Stormy Jones.

By this time Stormy's girl has had enough of the surf board for one lesson, and she suggests—

"Let's dress and walk around in the crowd."

"We haven't done any diving yet," objects Stormy, knowing a good reason why he couldn't dress and walk around in the crowd.

They go inside to the bath-house pool and Stormy does the back flip, the jack-knife and the whirl and then offers to show her, but it wasn't any use.

"I'll meet you outside," says the girl. "I'm going to dress now, and we'll dance a while before I have to go."

"All right," says Stormy, not knowing anything else to say and thinking he will make a sneak back to a dark part of the beach and find another girl.

But Stormy didn't want to do this. He liked Katie and outside he could see the crowd and hear the music and smell hot roasted peanuts and pop-corn. Groups milled and pushed around the attractions, and in front of a side-show two black boys bent and twisted over a couple of big banjos, singing "Lizzie High Brown Done Come to Town."

"Golly, I wish I had some clothes," says Stormy to himself and begins to look about him.

Every minute or two the swinging doors from the men's dressing-rooms opened and new bathers came out, heading for the pool or the beach, and others went in to dress.

Stormy took one more dive, thinking it over, while Mr. Temptation nudged him in the ribs. As he came up treading water, Willie Coogle, yeoman third-class, of the home ship *Minny*, stepped through the door, all white and pink-legged and innocent.

Stormy was looking for a victim and Willie Coogle suited him to a hair, for Willie Coogle had clothes. Stormy sidled up to him in the pool.

"Hello," he says.

"What're you doing ashore?" Willie wants to know.

"Special liberty," says Stormy. "Got to go out now and dress. So long."

And in that time Stormy has read the number on the brass room-tag around Willie Coogle's neck. He steps through the swinging doors, makes a bluff at looking at the identification tag round his neck, which is about the size of the room check, and hollers out "Thirty-four" to the busy attendant, who turns the key and lets him in without arguing.

There's Willie Coogle's clothes all laid out neat and fine, and six minutes later Stormy is in them and meeting the girl outside. He has half a month's pay of his own in a belt around his body, and what Willie Coogle has he leaves with the wet bathing-suit in the booth, slipping out and closing the self-locking door

when the attendant is over in another aisle.

Stormy is happy. He has clothes and a girl and money and, thinking of Willie Coogle, he shrugs and thinks he's done his full duty by an idling yeoman, since he has left him a bathing-suit.

"Many a good guy has had to do with less," Stormy says to himself.

Stormy could tell from the way the girl frolicked with her language that she did not belong in the homes that made a circle of lights on the foot-hills back of town.

"Guess you'll have to be getting back up on the heights," he kidded when she dodged a hot-dog sandwich and took a little roll of mints instead.

"Pretty soon now," she says, coming back at him. "I'd take you for a joy-ride only both of our chauffeurs are having a half-day off and mother and dad are using the little car themselves."

"You're excused," says Stormy. "I know how those things are myself. My uncle's got a prune ranch up at Banning, and he put me in the Navy so as to help eat up the crop, something like the undertaker that had his son educated to be a doctor."

"Anyhow you dress funny," says the girl. "Your uncle must be short of clothes, the way you're outgrowing that suit."

"And me only having them a little while," says Stormy. "But, being less personal, how's chances for me to win you one of these cutie dolls?"

Stormy stops at the nearest stand.

"Come on," says the girl, taking his arm. "You'd never get one off of old 'Beezer' in twenty years."

SHE leads him down the promenade about a block and springs a surprise on Stormy by stepping behind the little counter.

"Where you been, Katie?" asked the man in charge, a little old man with white, bushy whiskers, looking like a preacher.

"I been having a swim, pa."

"Well, you get in here and hold the place down while I get me a bite to eat."

He scuttles out back, leaving the girl to whirl the wheel, put the money on the numbers and do the spiling.

"How's chances to give you a hand?" Stormy asks, forgetting all about the borrowed clothes.

"Come on," Katie tells him. "You ought to be a winner, but you'll have to work quickly."

The game was easy. There were seven tin platters, each named for one of the days of the week and when a dime is put in each the wheel is spun and one of the seven takes a doll. For the boss of the concession it means that the crowd buys a doll for seventy cents, ten cents coming from the winner and sixty from the six losers.

"Get 'em down, get 'em down!" cries the girl and, while Stormy whirls the red, white and blue painted wheel, the girl jollies the folks in the crowd into putting a dime into each plate.

Stormy is having the time of his life. If the plates go slow in filling up, he puts dimes in the odd ones himself and, as a sign that this is Stormy's big night, it wasn't long before he had three dolls stacked up on the counter on the side where he stood. Then he starts in to help out the girl in the speling. Shipmates come by and take a chance. Stormy gave the dolls he'd won to three little ragged Mexicans. It made a big hit. The little stand was rushed with business.

"WHERE'D you get him, Katie?" asks a wiry, nervous man who worms into a place against the board by and by, and speaks to the girl.

He is wearing a light gray suit and a cap with loud black and white checks.

Stormy wondered where he had seen him before. The man spoke sidewise from his mouth in a way that Stormy remembered.

"He's a winner, Katie," "Checked-cap" goes on. "You got these other doll camps wondering what to do next."

"Play or shove off," Stormy tells him. "Don't hang around here if you won't risk a dime. Risk a pair of jitneys or paddle on."

The man turns to him.

"Don't get fresh, 'Redhead,' or I'll buy out the joint and fire you."

Stormy had words handy, but he didn't use them, for Micky Doran, his sidekick, and another signal boy on the

Minnie had hold of his arm, pulling him around so that they could whisper in Stormy's ear; but Stormy had remembered, as the man in the gray suit looked at him, where he had seen him. It had been in a crowd of visitors on the ship that day. The ship had been full of them. They were all over, in the conning tower where he was trying to scrub out a suit of whites, down around the galley pestering the cooks, being showed around proudly by the young apprentices. Among them had been the man whose face twisted when he talked.

Micky Doran was speaking close to Stormy's freckled ear.

"Beat it, you boob, the shore patrol is out scouting for you now. It's a wonder some of them haven't picked you up before this."

"What's happened?" demands Stormy.

"Everything," says Micky Doran. "Get out here back of the stand where it's dark and I'll tell you."

"I got to go, Miss Katie," Stormy apologizes. "I'll see you again. This here shipmate of mine is in trouble."

The two dodge back through the crowd and around to the sandy beach behind the stand and, as they go, Stormy sees the girl take a small oblong package from a tin box with a lock on it and hand the package over to the man in the gray suit.

"What're you doing with Willie Coogle's suit and rating badge on?" Micky Doran asks him. "He's spilling an awful lot of wild talk. What you been doing, anyhow, Stormy?"

"Nothing, only I played off sick and swam ashore. I borrowed Willie Coogle's clothes while he was in the bath-house taking a swim. What's he hollering about? I left his money and everything right there."

"And a wet bathing-suit that he knows is yours," said Micky. "You're a wise gazabo, now ain't you? And that's not all. Somebody has robbed the admiral's safe out at the ship. They sent a blinker ashore that you were gone, and when Coogle adds this yarn about you swiping his clothes—you know how that sweet-scented typewriter fiend likes to talk—they've already got you hooked up for a regular wild bandit."

"I'll tell you what to do," said Stormy. "I'll get out of all but the drawers and

undershirt, and you take Willie's clothes back to the bath-house. Tell him you found 'em or something. He's hanging around there somewhere. He couldn't get far with nothing on but a bathing-suit. I'll get on out to the ship."

"I won't do nothing of the kind," says Micky Doran. "I'm a friend of yours, or I wouldn't have stopped and tipped you off, but I'm not aiming to get mixed up in this thing no further. I've told you. Now you get out of this the best way you can."

With this Micky goes on about his own business.

"I'll dent the empty can of this Willie boy," Stormy mutters to himself, sitting down in a dark place on the sand to think it over.

Stormy is a good deal resentful toward the whole world that minute. Just as he was going good, all set for a full due, everything had carried away.

A big moon was just dipping up over the water. The yelling of the merry-makers over beyond him at the lighted beach, and behind him on the promenade the jazzing of a cut-up band, made him feel like he was outside a circus tent, listening to what went on inside.

But Stormy was quick on the bounce. He'd already had a lot of fun and pretty soon he'd figured out a way to get out of trouble.

"Guess I'll be doing a little backing up," he told himself and started toward the rear end of the doll concession.

Katie's father is back, and the crowd in front has dwindled down to a few who have sort of lost interest. Stormy motions the girl to one side.

"Say," he says, "you've been acting like a good scout; how's chances to do a fellow a favor?"

"A couple of marines with belts on just left here," Katie tells him. "They asked where you had gone. What have you been doing?"

"I got my clothes mixed with another fellow's," says Stormy, "and I want to give 'em back. He's raising an awful holler, the poor sardine, but I got nothing to put on myself."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Will you take these five dollars," says Stormy, "get your father to let you off for a minute and buy me a bathing-suit

up at the bath-house? I'll wait out back here. I can wear the bathing-suit until I get to my own clothes."

"Pa's got an old suit he may give you, if a bathing-suit is all you want. He's pleased at the showing we made while he was gone," says Katie.

"If he would," says Stormy mighty wistful, "I'll find a way to send it back tomorrow. Let him keep the five until I do."

"Never mind the money," says Katie. "You wait here."

In about five minutes Stormy, using a dark spot on the beach as a dressing room, is ready to swim back to the *Minny*. He picks up an old newspaper, wraps it around Willie Coogle's clothes and gives a boy fifty cents to take the bundle to the bath-house.

STORMY'S plan was simple. He meant to get back aboard and into his hammock and then deny everything. Willie Coogle would get a choice of being beat up or of keeping his mouth shut, and Stormy figured he'd be so glad to get his clothes again that he might be reasonable to a shipmate.

Stormy is so well pleased that he takes a chance on saying good-by to Katie once more.

"You look funnier than ever," Katie greets him. "Pa's old bathing-suit fits too quick."

"Guess I don't win a prize," grins Stormy, "but you've saved my life. I got to shove off now. Maybe I can make another liberty before the week's out."

"Hide!" Katie warns him. "Here comes another bunch with belts and clubs, and your head's a torch."

Stormy finds company behind the concession this time, it being the man with the gray suit, named "Dill" Hardin.

"Looky here, Redhead," begins Dill Hardin, twisting his mouth and setting on a stool in the shadow smoking a cigar, "you've been around here plenty. I'm going to turn you in to these fellows that's hunting you if you don't beat it."

"You'd pick a mussy job," says Stormy. "When did you get to be anybody's guardian?"

"Regular eat-em-alive Bosco you think you are," sneers Dill. "Hike now, before you get trimmed. Katie's a nice

kid, and I don't mind her saying howdy now and then, but don't try to repeat."

"She's too good for you, Crooked Face," says Stormy. "If I didn't have to get on back I'd call your bluff now."

"Any poor little lie will do," jibes Dill Hardin.

Then he gets a surprise, for Stormy Jones, at the end of a spoiled liberty, quick on the trigger anyhow and exceedingly hostile toward everything in general, shoves the startled Mr. Dill Hardin over backward off the stool and stands by, waiting for him to get up.

As he upsets, the oblong packet slips from Dill Hardin's pocket and falls on the sand outside the shadow of the tent, plain to be seen from the lights on the promenade. Stormy sees it but has no time to wonder what it is, for, snarling and raging, Dill Hardin is up and at him.

Stormy finds that the quick-moving Dill can handle himself. He collects a couple of stinging jabs which rocks him, gives back a couple and then settles in for a real scrap, hoping a weak spot is going to show soon and let him get away. A crowd begins to gather, like gulls around meal-time, for both being quick movers, they hadn't been able to keep behind the tent.

"I'm through," says Dill Hardin all of a sudden, putting his hands down. "Too much popularity. Lay off, Redhead; the bulls will be here in a minute for a pinch."

Stormy didn't want to be caught, either, and especially hated to let a little side issue like fighting Hardin ball up his plans. Jumping Hardin had been a flare-up due to the lie being passed, and he felt better for giving and taking a few punches. Hardin, with his hands down, giving up, made it all Jake for Stormy, so he backed off more friendly.

"There's something you dropped," he tells Hardin.

The way the man grabbed for it made Stormy look close. They'd been fighting all over and around the packet, tramping it into the sand and tearing the wrapper. Once, when he kicked it, Stormy had seen what looked like a bill and now, when Hardin slipped it into his pocket, something fell out—a medal hung by a faded ribbon. It looked familiar to Stormy, a heap like the ad-

miral's gold medal he wore on dress occasions and at general muster.

Micky's yarn about the admiral being robbed popped into Stormy's mind. He remembered, too, that he had seen Dill Hardin on the ship that day.

Both snatched for the fallen medal, shoving and scrambling, Stormy to make sure it was the admiral's and Hardin to get back what he knew to be incriminating evidence. Stormy finally got a grip on the medal part and tore the ribbon out of Hardin's hands.

"I want to see this," says Stormy, holding it behind him out of the other's reach and backing away.

Just then a couple of the shore patrol hunting Stormy Jones come wandering from the walk in front to see what's going on. Stormy, seeing the uniforms and the clubs and belts before the guard sees him, darts through the fringe of rubber-neck spectators and runs. Holding a suspicion is one thing, thinks Stormy, medals being a lot alike, and getting caught by a shore patrol is another.

Dill Hardin comes tearing right at his heels, not in line for a mix-up with police of any kind himself, and, while Stormy is just suspicious, Hardin knows that the medal belongs to the admiral. He wants it back and he wants to get away, and both wants lead toward the fleeing Redhead in the old bathing-suit.

"A couple of guys staging a little scrap," volunteers one of the fight fans.

"One of 'em a gob?" asks the ranking marine of the shore patrol.

"No. One of them in a bathing-suit and the other in civilian's clothes."

"Nothing to us, then," says the leather-neck. "Let's be proceeding. It beats me how they get that way on nothing but 2.75."

Stormy Jones was sprinting well. He'd started back to the ship and now seemed a good enough time to keep going. Thinking that if the medal was a clue to the robbery he might find a way to use it, Stormy slipped it into his belt.

A SMALL pier led out a little way into the ocean and Stormy ran light-footed out over it, hoping his bare feet would miss a few of the splinters and

nails. Dill Hardin gained on him, however, for it was rough going.

When Stormy dove off, he heard the thump of shoes on the boards close behind. For all he knew, it was the shore patrol. He grinned as he hit the brine, for no marine all dolled up in a tailor-made, liberty-making suit would follow into the water; so he began swimming easily out toward the lights of the *Minny*.

Dill Hardin stopped at the end of the pier and hurried off his shoes and coat, slipping the packet inside his shirt. Nobody was following and the pier was deserted. He could see the blur of Stormy Jones' head in the moonlight and the swirl of water round him. Things were breaking pretty good for Mr. Dill Hardin. He could think of no way which would suit him better than to get the medal away from Stormy in the water or make him drop it, for Mr. Dill Hardin's one redeeming pastime was swimming. In lean days he had even given swimming lessons, and once he had pulled off a series of exhibitions. Making a neat flip off the end of the pier, he took up the chase.

Stormy was out a hundred yards, swimming with a long lazy stroke, dopping out the best way to get on board without being seen. He had decided on the anchor chain and is a third of the way safe, when Dill Hardin's quick overhand hits a wave-top and splashes. Dill dives promptly, but Stormy, with plenty of time and curious to see who's after him, waits. Dill comes up close by.

"Hello," says Stormy. "Thought a mermaid coughed."

"Gimme that thing of mine you swiped," says Dill.

"It's you, is it?" says Stormy, relieved that it's not a duty-bound marine. "What's all the excitement? You're liable to get your hair damp."

"You're liable to feed the fish. Come on now before I drown you."

"Drown who?" challenges Stormy. "I don't see no fins on you."

With that Dill Hardin makes a pass forward which Stormy evades by diving. Dill gets a clutch on Stormy's bathing suit, but the old cloth rips away. Stormy swims under water off to one side and comes up ten yards away, flirting his head and laying down for his crawl stroke

which has been the despair of a lot of shipmates. He feels no fear of Dill but is positive now that it's the admiral's medal he's got inside his belt. The chances look slim that this fellow can catch him in the water, but Dill Hardin is a hundred to one shot. He begins to gain on Stormy.

"THIS bird's a fish," thinks Stormy. "Why couldn't it have been an easy one? Oh, you trouble!"

He dives sidewise again, misses being caught by a foot, and this time Stormy has less lead when he gets going again, for Dill has guessed the direction of his dive. Stormy begins to lose his goat. He stops sudden in his stroke, turns and kicks at Dill's chin. Dill dodges backward.

"Rough stuff, huh?" he says. "Look out, kid. I was graduated on this game before you started. I'll give you one more chance. Hand over that property of mine and you can go. Otherwise, look out. If I have to get you, remember I'm no life-saver."

The two were treading water, swimming slowly around each other just out of reach. Dill's breath wasn't as good as Stormy's, but they're both panting. Stormy has his answer ready before Dill gets through making his speech. He's upright and facing Dill with his knees drawn up under his chin, waiting for a chance to swipe his feet out at the other.

"Come and get it," he jeers.

Dill is cock-sure of winning out and eager to have the thing over and be on his way, so he comes in a rush. Stormy's legs unbend like a pair of sprung levers and thump Dill full in the middle.

"Oof!" says Dill in a sort of grunt and swallows a mouthful of sea-water. Stormy didn't wait to see what happened. As his feet landed he turned again and made full-speed for the ship.

Dill Hardin is mad all the way through, his little woolly pet getting loose for fair when Stormy lands on his tummy. Besides, getting a setback where he thinks he rates first honors hurts his pride, and also Stormy is giving no evidence of letting go the medal.

This time Dill gains slowly, for he is handicapped with more clothes than Stormy. It cost him real work to drag

the extra weight through the water at the speed it takes to overhaul Stormy. To made up for it, however, his stroke is perfect.

He's in reach again when they're a few hundred yards from the ship. Now Dill means to take no chances. If Stormy turns to keep him from getting a grip on his neck, he figures to beat the sailor to the kick-off. He realizes that he's getting tired and will have to work fast, for they've spurted most all the way to the ship and his wind is going. He's relieved when Stormy has to dive again.

Dill did not try to guess which side Stormy took, but kept right on for half a dozen strokes before he stopped. Then he waited for Stormy to break water, being between him and the ship, when they face each other again.

"I've got you now," he says, edging up for a swift dive at Stormy's feet.

"Like you had me last time. Let me by before I hand you another smash in the ribs."

Stormy makes the mistake of using the old tactics again. Dill makes a feint at rushing, stops a stroke short and, when Stormy's feet go out in search of him, one of them gets caught fast in both of Dill's hands. Stormy strikes out with his fists and kicks with his other foot, but it's no use. Dill knows exactly what he's about and all Stormy knows is rough and tumble.

Dill holds the foot long enough to pull himself up to a sure grip; then he holds Stormy so close with his arms and legs that Stormy can't hit out with knees or fists. Dill begins what he calls "drowning out" in a water fight, that being to keep Stormy under and himself on top most of the time and let Stormy thresh and twist himself into losing.

But Mr. Dill Hardin didn't count on how anxious Stormy was to get back to the ship and what a fighting fool a red-head is right in his own back yard, 'most in hailing distance of the *Minnie*, and, being mad, he forgot how tired he was when he started this close-in scrap.

Stormy feels the game going against him and he concentrates on breaking free, working an elbow loose and jamming it in where it will do the most good. A couple of hard twists more and he's clear, with Dill trying to catch him again,

instead of guarding his face, at which Stormy takes a full swing right on the jaw. The blow dazes Dill and, before he can recover, Stormy's knees shoot into his stomach. Dill lets out another "oof," like it hurt him and paddles a minute, breathing hard.

"I feel cramps coming," he says. "Don't leave me, kid!"

Stormy waits to make sure and in a little while Dill shows plainly that he's drowning right there. Stormy takes him in tow and, owing to it being such a busy night for him too, he finally lands at the port gangway of the *Minnie* about all accounted for.

"DON'T stand there gaping," he bawls out to the gangway watch. "Bear a hand and help me carry this fellow on deck. Him and me both lacks about a paymaster's shoe-string of being drowned."

"Is that you, Jones?" says the officer of the deck cool-like. "Where have you been?"

"I wasn't feeling extra well, sir," says Stormy, "and I started in to take a little swim. This here fellow was hollering for help—must have been upset out of a boat or something."

"Sounds likely," said the officer of the deck. "You've been ashore, Jones."

"Me, sir," says Stormy, and he starts in again like it was the chorus of a song. "I wasn't feeling extra well and I started in to take——"

"Yeh," said the officer of the deck, "I heard you the first time——"

Just then the loosened shirt of Mr. Dill Hardin, opened in the effort to revive him, revealed the wet, oblong packet, and, stuck in loose, plain to see, is the admiral's gold medal minus part of the ribbon which had held it.

Stormy Jones had slipped the medal in with the other stuff just after he reached the lower step of the gangway. He had read what was engraved on the back, too, and knew it was the admiral's.

"Why, this is the stuff that was stolen from the admiral's safe!" says the officer of the deck. "What do you know about this, Jones?"

"Nothing at all, sir," says Stormy Jones. "I was swimming around just about ready to come back aboard, and

feeling some better, when I heard this man holler for help, and that he's got cramps."

This time the officer listens more respectfully.

Dill Hardin was coming to.

"Take him down to the sick bay," orders the officer of the deck, "and put an armed guard over him. Messenger, go down and tell the admiral that we think we have recovered his property. Jones, you get some clothes on. The admiral may want to see you."

The admiral did want to see Stormy, and, with a pair of pants and a jumper on top of the wet bathing-suit, Stormy sees the admiral, a very different looking admiral from the one he is used to seeing in dignified gold lace on the bridge, for he sits back in his bunk in his pajamas and looks to Stormy like a kind-hearted old man who has just been roused from a nap.

Stormy falls back on the old original and a good many "yes, sirs" and "no, sirs" and keeps clear of entangling details.

In the morning Dill Hardin is identified by a wire description from San Francisco and, after a little stalling, he admits the robbery. Stormy's story becomes like reenforced concrete, especially since he's been able to see Willie Coogle

as he comes aboard and has whispered a few shameful and sincere threats in Willie's ears.

The thing that pleases Stormy just as much as having the admiral call him down to his room again and tell him plainly that, after a careful investigation, they have found his story substantially correct, is a note from Katie of the doll concessions.

"Pa and I didn't have a thing to do with Dill Hardin putting that package in our tin safe," writes Katie. "A lot of people bring things to pa to keep for them because he's honest, but I've made him promise to quit it. I hear the fleet is going South. Maybe I'll see you at San Clemente."

After that the only thing that worried Stormy about the night's liberty was the way the admiral looked at him sometimes when he was on signal watch. He remembered how long the admiral had hesitated as he chose the words, "substantially correct."

Some of us have been knowing the admiral a lot longer than Stormy, and we figure that the only thing in his mind is a lot of regret that he can't ask Stormy Jones and have Stormy tell him exactly what happened that night, for the admiral is just the right age to remember that one time he was a boy himself.



THE JAGUAR



by Arthur O. Friel

Author of "The Sloth," "The Spider," etc.

ROARING his challenge, the jaguar prowls the jungle by day and by dark, finding no other animal that dares to stand and fight him. And let no one tell you *senhores*, that he does not attack men also—yes, and kill them, too. Wounded, he will spring in fury and destroy the man who injured him. Unwounded, but savage from hunger, he will devour a lone bush-traveler as he would a tapir or a capybara. If you fight him you must kill or be killed.

You say, *senhores*, that while you were exploring the upper Javary River one of your companions was fatally torn by a jaguar he had shot? Ah, that is sad and I grieve to hear it, yet it but proves what I say. We men who work in the great Brazilian rubber forests all know that when we meet that great cat our first bullet must go home or our mates may have to dig a hole and plant a little wooden cross above what is left of us.

You will pardon me, I hope, if my talk about that beast has revived painful memories of your lost comrade. I did not know. It was not about the animal himself that I wished to tell you tonight, while the river steamer carries us on down toward Manaus, but about a man from your North America whom I called "the Jaguar."

What part of your great country he came from I do not know. He once

said that he had thrashed men all the way from the Rio Grande to the Yukon and back again, and, though I do not know where those rivers are, I think they must be very far apart. Sometimes he would talk of hot deserts of dry sand where men rode on horses for many miles without finding any water, and sometimes he spoke of very cold deserts of white, where the rivers turned solid and the rain fell in flakes which became so deep that men had to walk on frames called snowshoes or slide along over it on wooden things drawn by dogs named huskies.

He told, too, of great mountains where men hunted gold, of forests where the trees were cut down by lumberjacks and of plains where there were no trees at all, but many cattle. He had been in all these places and more besides, and he said he never had met a man who could thrash him, though he had encountered a few who had given him all the fighting he wanted for a time. He grinned when he said this, as if he enjoyed the memories of those fights. His name was Flynn.

I called him Jaguar because he was a jaguar. When he moved, I could see the muscles roll under his skin as smoothly as those of the great cat, and like that cat he could move with lightning swiftness. Though he wore heavy boots, he could travel as softly as the jaguar and he had the people restless-

ness; he was always ready to fight anything that crossed his path.

He even looked like a jaguar, for he was not tall but rather thick-set, with reddish hair, broad face, blunt nose, eyes rather wide apart, and on his face there was a sprinkling of dark moles like the small black spots on the face of a jaguar. One had to look closely to see those spots, though, for he was as brown as any Indian—brown to the waist, for he wore no shirt at all. For that matter, he did not wear much of anything except ragged breeches and those heavy boots. Also, he prowled alone.

I too was alone when I met him. I was in charge of the men working a rich rubber district far out from headquarters, so far out that it took us days of jungle travel to go from that place back to a *tambo* where others of our men were, and where we could leave the rubber we brought out and get the supplies we took in. We had discovered this district the year before and had found the trees so big and old that these lands were well worth working in spite of the difficulties of transport.

Yet after a time I grew restless and dissatisfied even with this fine area and, though we were already too far out, I wanted to go still farther and see what was beyond us. This was likely to be dangerous because there were not only the usual risks of the deep jungle to be met but also the chance of being killed and eaten by wild men who lived somewhere in that country. These *barbaros* had surrounded our camp once, soon after we first came there, and there had nearly been a fight between them and us, but after we treated them in friendly fashion and gave them a great meal they had gone away satisfied that we meant no harm to them. They had warned us, though, not to come to their village.

Now we did not know where their village was and so, in exploring the forest, I might blunder into their hands and get scant mercy from them. Still, I felt the call to go out and find whatever I might, danger or no danger. And so at length I put another trusty man in charge of the work, made up a pack with a week's supplies and started out alone on the scouting trip which was to lead me to the Jaguar.

FOR two days I roved through the bush, finding nothing. On the third day I came to a river. It was a quiet little river, not very wide but deep, and I could see no way to cross it unless I swam. This I did not care to do unless I had to, for I knew well enough what deaths might be lurking under the innocent-looking surface. While I stood looking at it, I heard a monkey overhead and realized that I was hungry. I shot him and made a little fire there beside the water and cooked a meal for myself, thinking that afterward I would work along the bank until I found a fallen tree or some other way of reaching the other side. But before I had finished my monkey this program was changed.

Being busy with my eating, of course I did not watch the empty river. There came a watery sound. I looked and saw that the river no longer was empty. Floating down it was a man, naked to the waist, standing on a log which was sharp at both ends like a canoe and guiding himself with a long pole. He was looking at my smoke and, as I stood up, he pushed his pole against the bottom of the stream and swung his drifting craft toward me.

The log turned slowly and sluggishly. I stood amazed, wondering that he could keep his footing on it so surely, for it was not dug out at all, *senhores*, nor even flattened for his feet, but just a plain, rough tree-trunk. If I had tried to ride a thing like that I should certainly have fallen off, but he stuck to it as if he had grown to it. Still, he was soon to tumble off, though neither of us knew it just then.

There came a sloshing sound from the other side of the stream and we both looked to see what had caused it. There, swimming out to this man, came a big, wicked-looking alligator which had been lying under the bush along the bank. When the half-naked man saw this, he growled a deep, hoarse growl and turned about on his log to meet the *jacaré*. He lifted his pole, too, and I observed that the upper end of it was sharpened to a point. Holding this pole like a spear, he waited.

When the scaly monster neared him, he jabbed at the eye but missed it. Quick as lightning, he jabbed again and yet

again. At his third attack the reptile suddenly thrashed the water in a tail-swinging flurry, and I knew the point had reached its mark. But the fight was not yet over. The brute swerved to one side and came on, and before the man could stop him he had got his claws on the log.

It was then that I had a chance to see what this man really could do with his feet. The log rolled and shook under the grasp of the *jacaré*, but the man danced away from the monster as nimbly as a monkey and stayed upright on his crazy craft as easily as if on solid ground. Then, as the reptile turned and came at him with those terrible jaws half open, he lowered his sharp pole swiftly and with one mighty heave rammed it straight down the huge throat.

The smashing struggle that followed was too much for even him. The stricken brute tore about in the water and threw the log violently aside. The man was knocked off, struck the water with a heavy splash and disappeared. Then the *jacaré*, still fighting and clawing at the pole in its gullet, went under too, and I was left staring at the wet log and the bubbling water.

Soon a head bobbed up not far away, the head of the man, who already was swimming hard and fast for the shore. He reached it unharmed, scrambled up the clay bank and stood before me, red-faced and breathing hard.

The clay he had come through was wet and sticky and he was smeared with it from head to foot. He looked funny and I laughed, but my laughter ended quickly. He scowled and sprang at me, and before I could move, his fist, which was as hard as a bullet, hit me in the face. I tripped backward and sat down hard in the middle of my own fire.

I did not stay there long, you may be sure, and when I came up my *machete* was out. No man had ever knocked me down with his fist before—nor has any man done so since, for that matter—and between pain, shock and anger, I was in a deadly rage. I struck to kill, but as far as hurting him was concerned I might better have struck at a tree—the tree would at least have stayed where

it was. He slipped aside, my blade hit nothing and I almost fell from the violence of my own blow. Before I could straighten myself he leaped at me again. I felt a terrible shock under one ear and the whole world seemed to explode.

WHEN my senses came back to me I was sprawling on the ground, and on the other side of the fire that man was squatting and calmly eating my roast monkey. I sat up and stared at him and felt my jaw, which was sore. At that he grinned.

"What did you hit me with?" I asked.

"This." He held up a big, hard fist. "And if ye are not more careful when and how ye laugh, me fine lad, ye may feel it again."

"Senhor Onça," said I, getting up rather dizzily, "I will laugh as I please, whether you like it or not."

He scowled again and moved as if to lay down the meat he was eating, but then he changed his mind and took another bite.

"Faith, ye are a real man," he said. "'Tis not many men would talk back to 'Walloper' Flynn after twice pushin' their face against his fist. And why do ye call me Mr. Jaguar?"

"Because you look like one and act like one," I answered.

Then I began looking for my *machete* which I had lost. He chuckled and took another mouthful of meat. When he had swallowed it he told me:

"If it's yer toad-stabber ye want, it's under me foot, and yer gun is behind me. If ye want 'em, come and git 'em."

Then I saw that he had both my weapons, but my anger had cooled now and I felt ashamed that I had attacked him with my big knife. Perhaps he saw this in my face, for he added:

"That's all right, me lad, I don't blame ye. If a man sat me down in a fire I'd make him look like somethin' the cat brought home. Now if ye want to behave yerself, ye can have some of me meat."

It was amusing, his coolness in offering me some of the monkey I had killed and cooked and partly eaten, and I could not help laughing. I sat down and between us we finished the meal. Then I told him who I was and why I was

there and asked if he knew of any rubber near there.

"I do not," he replied, "but there may be plenty of it. One of the things I know nothin' about is rubber. There might be rubber-trees bouncin' all around me and I'd never see them. 'Tis the luck of the Flynns never to see anything with money in it. Some men can stub their toe and fall into a gold-mine, but the Flynns can stub their toe so hard they bust their foot and they only tumble into a mud-hole."

"If you do not know rubber, *senhor*, what are you doing here?" I asked.

"Faith, now ye've asked me a hard one. I don't know meself why I'm here, except that I've got a wanderin' foot. I've been pokin' around them Andes over west, lookin' for some of the gold them old Inkies cachéd along the Marañon River, but all I got was a lot of hard fightin' with some wild guys that didn't like to have me smellin' around. Fightin' is a grand game, lad, but when a man's got both hands full of it he can't pick up gold too—specially when he can't find the gold. So, after a while, I drifted over here to see this low country and I've just been hangin' around and associatin' with the other monkeys. When I heard yer shot a while back I had to come and have a look at ye. I haven't seen a man for weeks."

"But how do you live? And tell me, *senhor*, how can you stand on a log like that, even when fighting a *jacaré*?"

"Live? Easy enough—by huntin' and trappin'. Any man that's been a trapper can live by fixin' up snares and so on. As for stickin' on the log, I was a lumberjack once and I've run a river many a time. Yer feet git trained to the logs. Now I'll have to fix meself another log and pole, I guess. But say, I dunno if I will or not. I'm gittin' tired of hangin' around. Do ye want a partner, now?"

I thought and looked him over again. I liked him, even though he had knocked me senseless. But still . . .

"Any rubber that I may find, *senhor*, belongs not to me but to the *coronel* who employs me," I said. "So I can not share it unless he says so."

"Aw, what do I care for yer rubber!" he retorted. "I'd never stay long enough to make money on it. I've got the wan-

derin' foot, I tell ye, and I have to be on the move. If we find any, yer *coronel* can have the whole works; if we don't, we'll have the fun of lookin' for it anyway. Neither of us knows where he's goin', so let's go together. What d'ye say?"

I agreed at once. We started up the stream and after a time we reached a little hut. There he picked up the few things he had and made a pack of them.

"Now, where do we go from here, Larry, me lad?" he asked.

"Across the river, if we can get across. My name is *Lourenço*, not what you said."

"So ye told me before. It may be a fine name in Brazil, but not in the mouth of an Irishman. Since ye call me Jaguar, I will call ye Larry whether ye like it or not. As for the river, that's easy."

He took a slim ax he had and in a very short time he felled a tree into the water and trimmed off some of the larger branches. After cutting himself a pole too, we got on the tree and pushed out. Though I am a good boatman, I could do nothing on that sort of craft except hang on, squatting and using both hands and feet to keep myself balanced. We went with the current while my new companion worked the tree slowly to the other side. When we grounded at a bend we jumped ashore. There the Jaguar threw back his head and roared to anything that might hear:

"Hoo-wah! Hunt yer holes, ye buckaroos! Walloper Flynn is hittin' the trail again! Anything that wants a fight, come a-runnin'! Yeeeö-ow!"

He jumped in the air and cracked his heels together. Nothing answered him, except a parrot that squawked back from some place in the bush, and so we started on into the unknown.

WE tramped for days and came into hilly country. I had not intended to go so far or to stay out so long, but I knew the work would go on behind me under the man I had put in charge, and I told myself that this trip would be of value to the *coronel*, even if I found nothing, for it would make it unnecessary for him ever to send an expedition into this country to explore it.

So we pushed on, roving here and there with no destination in mind and seeing whatever we could see.

We shared alike on the food I had brought, but mostly we lived on what we could kill, for the Jaguar was a cunning hunter and I am not a bad shot myself, so we never lacked for meat. We did not hunt together, though. When we picked a place to camp we left our packs there and each of us went out by himself and hunted in his own way. In this manner we got more game than if we had gone together. It was in this way, too, that I happened one day to see a strange thing.

I had killed some game at a distance from our camping-place and was coming back with it, when I came upon the Jaguar. Though he had a very quick ear, he had not heard me approaching, for he was closely watching something. He stood with every muscle ready for a leap, his right arm tense and his hand partly open and curving toward the big revolver slung low on his thigh—the only weapon he ever carried.

Up on a large branch of a tree before him, crouched a jaguar—a red *onça* of the deep forest, which, like the man, was tense and ready to spring. The beast's lips were drawn back in a soundless snarl and his eyes seemed to blaze with rage. Yet he did not leap, but stayed there, his claws digging into the wood. I stood breathless, staring and wondering why the brute did not attack and why the man did not shoot. Then I glanced back at the man and saw what he was doing.

Senhores, he was deliberately provoking that wild beast by making faces at him!

He was giving back snarl for snarl, and his snarl was a sneering one, intended to goad the beast into fury. He did not speak, perhaps thinking that if he did so his voice would frighten the brute away, for many animals fear the human voice. The sneer on his face, however, was a worse taunt to the jungle king than anything the man could have said. When the jaguar still stayed where he was, the man stuck out his tongue at him and then he cleared his throat, making a noise like a hoarse growl, and spat toward the beast.

It was then that the jaguar sprang. He came like a flash of light. Like another flash the human jaguar attacked. So swiftly that I could see only a blur where his hand hung, he pulled his revolver and fired. Even as he shot he dived forward, straight under the leaping beast. He and the animal struck the ground almost at the same instant, the jaguar landing just beyond the man's boots.

The man twisted where he lay and fired again into the jaguar's head. The beast was dying already, for the first big bullet had wounded him mortally as he dropped through the air, but the second shot finished him before he could tear his attacker in the death-struggle. Then Jaguar Flynn hopped to his feet, looked at the dead brute and roared to the forest:

"Hoo-wah! Anybody else lookin' for Walloper Flynn?"

I BURST out of the bush and instantly he covered me with his gun, but when he saw who I was he pocketed it and said:

"Ah, there ye are, Larry me lad. Did ye see me playin' tag with the tom cat?"

"*Senhor Onça*," I scolded, "you are crazy! Why trifle with death in such a manner?"

"Aw, keep yer shirt on! I give him an even break; didn't I now? I'm fast, I am. And any time I meet anything faster than me, I'll take what's comin' to me."

Since there was not much use in saying anything more, I closed my mouth. He spoke the truth when he said he was fast, and, if he wished to match his speed against that of the king of the jungle, it was not my business to try to stop him. So I said nothing further about the matter and while we were cooking and eating the game I had killed we talked about our return to the river where we had met.

We had found no rubber worth working and now it was high time for us to go back. Neither of us wanted to travel over the same ground we had already seen, however, and we agreed to swing back in a sort of half-circle which would take us through new country. Since it made little difference

which way we went, we drew lots with a couple of twigs to see whether we should go to the right or the left. Chance decreed we should go to the left.

FOR another day and a half we rambled, bearing to our left all the time, through the same rough, hilly country. We found ourselves following something that looked like a faint path in the bush. There was nothing to show whether it had been made by men or by animals, and we went on without much caution, curious to see where it would lead us. The answer came with surprising suddenness. The ground dropped away under me and I fell into blackness.

The fall was not far and I jumped up, more scared than hurt. I was in a pit. It had been dug very cunningly there in the path and was covered over with a frame of small withes and vines concealed by a layer of leaves and dirt, so that it looked exactly like the rest of the ground, but it would bear no weight at all. This frame had been balanced across a pole which ran from one side of the pit to the other and which was only large enough to hold up the frame—far too small for a man to use in climbing out again. I looked up and there at the edge was my comrade peering down at me.

"Faith, ye seem to be in ——"

Just then the edge of the pit broke under him and down he came, knocking me backward. The fall struck the wind out of him and he sat there a minute gasping and rubbing his stomach. Then he went on:

"As I was sayin', ye seem to be in the hole, and now I'm in the hole too—as usual. Who d'ye think put this trap here, now?"

"The savages," I said. "It is a man-trap."

"So I thought. Cheer up, laddy-buck, the worst is yet to come, as the feller says. Now tell me, when the wild guys find what they've got, what will they do about it?"

"Kill us."

"Oh, sure. But how?"

"Probably by shooting arrows into us."

"Right away? As soon as they find us?"

"I think so."

"Well, that ain't so bad. Now if these ginks were North American Injuns they'd have a lot of fun with us before we cashed in. But a fast finish, with yer back to the wall and a gun in yer hand—no, that ain't bad at all."

"But after they kill us, friend Jaguar, they will eat us," I told him.

"Ow! So that's the game!" he exclaimed. "Sure, I thought there must be a joker somewhere in the pack. I've been wonderin' why they didn't leave a couple of nice fat poisonous snakes in here for us to fall on to, but I see now. They don't want to spoil the meat. Well, the lad that sinks his teeth in me will find he's bitin' a tough old bird. All the same, I'd rather go out of the world the way I come into it—with me body whole and me boots on."

"Were you born with boots on, *senhor*?" I asked.

He chuckled and answered:

"Aw, quit yer kiddin'. That's what folks call an Irish bull, me lad. I've got no time now to explain to ye what an Irish bull is, or what I mean by croakin' with me boots on. We've got to flap our wings and fly out of this hole first."

While we talked, we had both been looking over that hole and trying to find a way out. It seemed hopeless. The pit was about eight or nine feet deep and wider at the bottom than at the top; for there the sides had been cut inward, making them hang over so that a man could not possibly climb out. At the place where the Jaguar had tumbled in, though, this overhang had broken away under him, and there the ground was nearly straight up and down.

At that place we tried to get out, but our efforts to climb were useless, for the earth always gave way. We tried jumping straight up, hoping to grip the edge and pull ourselves out. The Jaguar did some splendid jumping, and you may be sure I also did my best, but we only got out of breath and hurt our fingers.

"If we only had the time we might pull down dirt enough to build ourselves a little hill from which to jump," said my companion. "But likely the wild guys will come moseyin' along soon."

Suddenly his face lit up as if a great thought had struck him. He looked at me and began to laugh. Then he

slapped his head with one hand and grumbled:

"Bonehead that ye are, why didn't ye think of it before? Tis as simple as liftin' a hod. Pardner, this trap can't be beat by one man but it can by two. Now do what I tell ye, and we'll be top-side again in a jiffy."

He squatted and I climbed on his back and put my feet on his shoulders. Then, while I balanced myself with my hands against the wall, he rose under me and I was lifted until my chest was above the ground.

"See anything?" he grunted.

I told him I did not and he ordered:

"All right, hop off me neck. I'll pass up yer gun and if any bad *hombres* come before I'm out, take cover and treat 'em rough."

I sprang out, took my rifle and looked all about for savages. None came and so I chopped off a piece of thick vine and fastened it to a tree, and he came up it hand over hand. Then I turned to go back as we had come but he would not hear of it.

"No man takes a fall out of me without a come-back," he growled. "If ye're afraid, go on back. I'm goin' to see where this path goes and maybe bust somebody's jaw for droppin' me in that hole."

OF course I went with him. More than that, I led the way, for I had had more experience in the jungle than he. We went slowly now and as we advanced I tested the ground with a long stick. It was well that I did. The path grew broader and more clear and, at a place where another faint trail joined it, my stick found another pit as cunningly concealed as the first.

We avoided it very carefully, lest the overhanging sides break and throw us in, but still we got near enough to tip the balancing top and look into it. We found that this trap had a sharp stake planted in the bottom where it would impale anything that fell on it.

Still farther on there came a sudden twang in the bush and an arrow flashed past my breast. We leaped behind trees and awaited an attack, but nothing more happened, even though the Jaguar cursed the Indians and dared them to come on.

After a time we came out again and sought the source of the arrow. We found it to be another trap—a spring-bow fixed to a tree, which had been loosed by an innocent-looking vine lying across the path. Only my long stick, prodding along the ground ahead of us, had saved me from being killed on the spot.

"These *hombres* ain't sociable, I'll say," my partner remarked. "They like their neighbors about as well as the Frenchies like the Germans. Maybe they're the same-fellers that surrounded ye that time back at yer rubber-house. Did ye say they warned ye not to come and see their girls? Uh-huh. Then their women must be good-lookers, or anyway they think they are. Whether they are or not, they're trouble-makers; ye can bank on that."

"Why?"

"Why? Because they all are. No matter where ye find 'em— Whisht! I hear somethin'!"

Somewhere ahead of us there sounded a faint rustle of bodies passing through the bush and the almost noiseless tread of bare feet. I promptly took cover behind a big tree where I could watch the path, but the Jaguar stayed where he was, ready and defiant, his fist closed around the butt of his revolver. There he stood, in plain sight, when half a dozen savages came around a bend in the path—big, hard-looking *barbaros* carrying bows, one holding a club.

"*Hoo-wah!*" roared the Jaguar. "Ye slimy siwashes! Lookin' for man-meat, hey? Here it is, raw and tough! Come and git it!"

They stood there motionless, staring at him. Then two of them swiftly raised their bows and shot. From the corner of my eye I saw him fall forward. I opened fire myself, pumping the bullets as fast as I could work the lever, and while I fought I heard again and again the roar of my comrade's big revolver and knew he was not killed.

Then there were no more *barbaros* before us, except a heap of dead ones in the path. Up from the ground beside me rose the Jaguar, first on hands and knees, watching the savages who lay very still, and then up on his feet.

"Where are you hit?" I asked.

"Hit? Nowhere, lad," he answered, reloading his weapon.

"But you fell."

"Sure! I dropped flat and shot from the ground. Didn't think I'd stand there like a dummy, did ye? Come on, let's look at the stiff's."

We counted the dead men and there were only five. I had been sure there were six, but the sixth man we could not find. He was the one with the club.

"He must have dived into the bush and gone back for more of his gang," said the Jaguar.

He had hardly spoken when yells arose somewhere ahead and off to our right.

"Meanin' that the geezer with the night-stick has arrived, and this trail will soon be boilin' with wild guys," he went on. "Wish I had more cartridges. Seein' that we're gettin' shy on shells, though, we'll take a little short-cut and let the army have the whole road. Come on!"

He stepped into the bush and started straight toward the place where the shouts were sounding.

It was madness, it was suicide, but I followed. We had little chance of escape now, I reflected, and we might as well go on as try to get away. He held a true course and we cut our way through the tangle until we came to a big opening. In it was a great house, wide and long and low, and around it we saw some women and children.

"Nobody home but the cats," he said. "The men are out huntin' us, back at —"

I never heard the rest of the sentence. A terrible blow struck the back of my head and I fell.

WHEN the daylight came back to me I was lying on the ground beside that big house, tied hand and foot. Beside me lay the Jaguar, also tied. Around us stood menacing savages. I tried to sit up, but an Indian put his big bare foot in my face and threw me back.

"Welcome to our city, Larry me lad," said the Jaguar. "I thought ye had cashed in. Faith, I'm half sorry ye didn't. It looks like the worst was yet to come, as I said a while back."

"How did we get here?" I asked.

"They jumped us. Where they jumped from I dunno. I felt 'em before I saw 'em. Somebody fanned ye with a club and some more landed on me neck and floored me before I could draw. Where do we go from here, d'ye think? Will they fry us or shove us in the stew-pot?"

"I think, my friend, that they usually cut off the hands and feet, cook them and throw away the rest," I told him.

"Ow! Dainty cusses, ain't they, now? Well, I don't want to discourage ye or anything, but I'm thinkin' we'll die sort of slow. See that big, mean-lookin' jasper all dolled up in feather-dusters? He's the chief, and he's got my ax. If he only lets me hands loose before he cuts 'em off, he'll git one stiff clout in the jaw, I promise ye."

A look at the feather-dressed chief filled me with dread but gave me a glimmer of hope, too. He was holding the ax as if he fully intended to chop us up alive with it, but still I felt the slight rise in spirits that comes to a man when he recognizes a face among his enemies.

I had met this chief before. He was the same man who had led the savages that time when they came to our *tambo* and I had talked with him a little in sign-language, so he might remember me now. Of course, it probably would do me little good if he did, since we had just killed five of his men, but a man in a desperate position will seize upon any hope, no matter how slight, so I quickly lifted my head and spoke to him.

I was kicked down again, but the chief had caught my call and he came and stood over me. His eyes were glittering and his mouth cruel. He remembered me, though, and I began trying to talk to him. This was difficult, for I did not know his language, nor he mine, and I could not make signs because my hands were tied. I rolled on one side and tried to make him understand that if he would loose my hands I would have something to say to him. Being curious, I suppose, he ordered a man to untie my arms, and I sat up.

"Good for ye, Larry!" whispered the Jaguar. "Make him let me loose, too, and we'll give him a riot yet."

I paid no attention to him, for I had an idea of my own and my hope was grow-

ing a little. I tried to tell the chief that we had not meant to come there but that we had been lost for days in the jungle, that we had found a path and followed it until we were suddenly attacked and that afterward we had tried to get away without doing more damage. He seemed puzzled and I saw he did not understand me very well, so I began all over again.

He turned and shouted and there came a rather old man. The chief let me know that I should talk to him. When I spoke to this man I found he could talk enough of my language to understand what I meant. I told him the same tale and he repeated it to the chief. Though the chief still looked ugly, he seemed a bit doubtful, too, perhaps remembering the time when he had visited us rubber-workers, and that we had been friendly and had told him all we wanted was the rubber-milk, and that we would do no harm.

Then another savage stepped up beside the chief and disputed me, pointing to the Jaguar, and the head man's face darkened again. The old man told me this was the Indian who had escaped from us—the one with the club—and that he had said I lied, for the Jaguar had not tried to flee but had dared them to come on while I hid in the bush and shot his companions down. My hope disappeared then and the chief lifted the ax. At that, the Jaguar, who had been listening closely, burst out into abuse of the man who had denounced us.

"Ye white-livered whelp!" he yelled. "Ye're a deserter in the face of the enemy! Ye never tried to fight! Ye sneaked into the bush while yer mates were fightin' and ran for home with yer tail between yer legs like a yellow dog! If we were loose ye wouldn't dare stand up to either one of us, man to man; ye'd hide behind yer gang for fear we'd bite ye!"

The old man quickly touched my shoulder and, nodding toward my companion, asked—

"What say?"

Since there seemed no hope for us, I told him defiantly just what the Jaguar had said and added that it was true. He turned and talked rapidly to the chief and all the others, pointing a finger at the

club-man. Some of the savages grunted among themselves and gave that deserter sour looks, and I saw they felt what I would feel myself—scorn for the man who would run from a fight. The minds of savage and civilized men are not so much unlike, *senhores*, as many people think, and nobody has much respect for a man who seems to be a coward.

The face of that one turned black with rage and he hissed something through his teeth and lifted his club to kill the Jaguar. The chief knocked him aside, probably because he intended to kill us himself and would not have any one rob him of the pleasure of doing it.

THEN the Jaguar turned on the chief himself.

"And ye're no better, ye pop-eyed Piute! Ye can kill a man when yer gang goes out and catches him and ties him for ye, but ye wouldn't dare fight me like a regular he-man, with yer bare hands. No, not even with all yer tribe behind ye! Ye're a — of a fine chief, I don't think! A woman or a kid can kill a man when he's tied, and that's what ye are yerself—nothin' but a woman! Bah!"

He sneered as he had sneered at the red *ouça* in the tree.

Again the old man leaned over and asked eagerly—

"What say?"

As I looked at him I saw his eyes were glowing. Suddenly hope sprang up in me again, for I felt that this old man wanted to make trouble for the chief and that might turn out for our good. At the worst, the Jaguar's defiance might goad the chief into killing us on the spot, and that might be better than what would happen otherwise.

Again I repeated what my partner had said, adding a few contemptuous words that I thought of on my own account. This, too, was turned into the savages' dialect by the old man, who seemed to be enjoying himself.

The chief became furious. He raised the ax to end the Jaguar's taunts then and there, but a low murmur sounded from some of the men and he stopped the weapon high in the air and stood there, glaring down at my partner.

The Jaguar sneered again, a snarling sneer that said as plainly as words that he despised the chief and anything he could do. Then he mocked him once more:

"Sure, ye're a woman and a coward and now ye're provin' it! I know it, and yer men know it! And as long as ye live, yer gang will remember it! If ye're a real man, untie me hands and fight me! Fight me and kill me fightin'—if ye can! Ye dare not risk it and I know that well, coward that ye are!"

This time I did not wait for the old man to ask, but gave him the Jaguar's challenge as fast as I could. I saw the Jaguar's desperate plan now and I saw also that he spoke some truth when he said the men would remember their chief's failure to accept the challenge of a helpless prisoner, for, though he had absolute power, still his men were fighters and he himself, as their head, should be a fighter too. The Jaguar's sneers would remain in their memories and the time might come when these memories would bode the chief no good, unless he fight now and prove himself worthy to be their leader.

The chief was no fool. He saw this too, infuriated though he was. He wheeled and struck at the old man from whose mouth these mocking words came to all who listened. The old man dodged, as if he had been expecting the blow, and escaped unhurt. Then the chief turned and glared at his men, who stared steadily back at him. He growled something, and one of them bent over the Jaguar and removed his bonds.

He got up swiftly, that comrade of mine, and rubbed his arms and legs where the vines had bound them. As he did so, he said softly:

"Well, Larry, it worked. A sociable little fight to a finish will now take place between Walloper Flynn, rough-stuff champeen of North Ameriky, and Kid Sloppy-Snoot of Jungletown. Yer hands are free, lad, and while the entertainment is goin' on ye'd better unravel the rest of yer harness and pick a good place for a quick sneak if any accident happens to me. Some wild guy might git boisterous and stab me in the back or somethin'."

Then he stretched himself and spoke to the chief:

"Lay down the ax, ye poor fish, and make yer men git back so ye'll have room to fall without hurtin' anybody."

When this last had passed through my mouth and that of the old interpreter, the chief threw the ax aside and tore off the feather dress which must have cost his women much patient work. The Indians gave way and made room. I was given no chance to free myself, though, for the man with the club came and stood over me, his face evil and I thought I was likely to be dead before the fight ended, whether the Jaguar won or not. The old man stepped up on the other side of me, however, and looked the other straight in the eye.

Almost at once some more *barbaros* came and stood by the old man, silent but watchful. This was followed by a movement of others who stood beside the man with the club and soon there were two parties of them lined up on either side of me. Not a word was said, but I began to see that in this tribe there was discord and that fully half of the savages favored the old man. He seemed to be using us for his own purpose, and though I did not know what that purpose was I felt safer now.

"Sorry, lad," said the Jaguar, who had seen my one chance of escape disappear in this way. "All ye've got left now is a ring-side seat. I promise ye a good battle, anyhow."

"*HOO-WAH!*"

With this cry he leaped at the chief.

The chief sprang too and they came together, both fighting like mad. For a time they were locked in a heaving, plunging, kicking, tearing tangle out of which came now and then the sharp smack of the Jaguar's fist on bare flesh and the snarling grunts of the Indian. After that first roar the Jaguar made no sound but fought as a true jaguar fights—silently.

The savage was bigger and heavier than he, but the Jaguar made up for this by his quickness and his knowledge of close fighting, so it was a very even match. After a while the chief gave a new sort of grunt—a grunt of pain. He broke out of the grapple and dodged backward. I heard the old man beside

me grunt too—a deep “*hough!*” of satisfaction. Then the chief sprang again at the man who had hurt him, and now his face was that of a demon.

The Jaguar’s fist smashed into the chief’s jaw as he came and the savage’s head snapped back from the force of the blow, but he was not stopped by it. One of his powerful arms swept around the Jaguar’s body and he strove to break my partner’s back. Try as he would, though, he could not complete that deadly hold with his other arm, for the Jaguar caught it at the wrist and held it in an iron grip.

Though they were too closely locked to give the Jaguar a throat-hold with his free hand, he got his forearm under the chief’s chin and jammed it hard against the windpipe, choking him. The Indian’s eyes bulged and he broke away again. As he gave ground, both the Jaguar’s fists slammed into his stomach—*crack-crack*—like gunshots close together. Another strangling grunt burst from the chief and he dropped his arms across his body. Quick as lightning the Jaguar leaped and shot terrible blows into the chief’s jaw and face, ending with a long swing that started low and landed on the ear. The chief went off his feet and fell sprawling.

It was the same sort of blow that once had knocked me senseless, though much harder than the one I received, yet it did not put that Indian out of the fight. Perhaps it did not strike just right or perhaps his head was harder than mine. At any rate he still kept his senses, though dazed.

It happened that, as he fell, one hand touched the ax which he had thrown aside. He clutched this and, with it, struck upward at the Jaguar’s stomach. Only a swift twist of the body saved my comrade; the ax slithered on his wet skin as it passed him. As he sprang aside to escape another blow, the chief jumped to his feet.

BEFORE he could use the ax again, however, my fighting partner had seized it, twisting it in the chief’s hand. For a moment they struggled for it, and then the Jaguar tore it away and hurled it to one side.

Even as the ax left his hands, the chief threw himself forward, his head

low, trying to grapple his opponent around the waist and throw him. The Jaguar brought one knee up sharply and caught the chief full in the face. Somehow his clutching arms, though they missed the hold he had tried for, grasped the Jaguar’s legs and pulled them from under him. They clinched and rolled on the ground, clawing at each other in a gasping fury that was terrible to see. In this ground fighting the chief’s size and weight told in his favor and he managed to crush his antagonist to earth and get a throat-hold.

If he had been satisfied to choke his man to death, he probably would have ended the fight then and there, for the white man’s arms were hampered by the ground, and, though he squirmed and wrestled and kicked upward with knees and feet, he could not break that hold.

Now that he had the advantage, however, the Indian was not satisfied with merely killing. Keeping one hand clamped around his victim’s throat, he reached with the other for his eyes. Somehow the Jaguar managed to roll his head and catch that hand in his teeth. Another sudden grunt of pain came from the savage. He let go his throat-hold and tried to free his hand, but the Jaguar bit deeper and seized the other hand in both his own, twisting the whole arm until the Indian fell sideways, unable to endure the strain on his shoulder. Then, in a wrenching struggle, the white man, in turn, downed the chief.

At this the man with the club, beside me, suddenly growled and darted out. I yelled a warning and my comrade rose swiftly to defend himself from this new assailant. There was no need of this, however, for the old man at my left yelled too, and instantly three of his men covered that treacherous Indian with their blow-guns. He stood scowling a minute and then sullenly came back. Meanwhile the chief had risen again.

Roaring with fury, he threw himself at the Jaguar in his last attack. The Jaguar, his breath whistling in his throat from the choking he had received, gave way before him. I noticed that his hands hung low and unready and I feared he was hurt. The chief, also watching those hands, probably thought the same, for his battered face writhed

in a cruel grin as he pressed hard on the retreating man. The Jaguar was watching him like a cat and suddenly stopped. His right foot shot up in the most terrible kick I ever saw—a kick with all the force of his powerful body behind it. The chief, rushing in with head lowered, caught that kick squarely on the chin. His head flew back. He reeled, plunged forward and sidewise and then lay still.

FOR a moment nobody moved. The Jaguar stood glowering down at his fallen foe, who lay with his head back in a queer position. Then he bent and lifted him by the shoulders. The head rolled in an unnatural way and hung down, limp and lifeless. That terrible kick had broken the chief's neck.

As he dropped the body, the *barbaros* swiftly closed in around him. From their midst he called to me:

"Larry, grab yer chance! Git loose and find our guns if ye can. I s'pose the whole gang will jump us now."

I lost no time, you may be sure, in attacking the twisted vines that held my legs, though I did not quite believe all the Indians would assail us. I had seen what the Jaguar had not—the attitude of the old man toward the chief, and his control of half the men. Still, I worked fast to free myself and soon succeeded. I had no time to seek our guns, however, nor need of it, for as I arose a strange thing happened.

Standing beside the dead chief, the old man put one hand out toward the Jaguar and talked to the other wild men in a quiet, calm tone of authority. When he had finished they all looked at the Jaguar with a new expression in their faces and some nodded as if pleased by what had been said. The Jaguar stood grim and ready, watching them all and not understanding. Seeing this, the old man turned toward me and I walked to him. He looked surprized at seeing me free but he smiled a little and beckoned. The others let me pass and he told me what he had just said to them. I was so astounded that I could hardly believe my ears, but I repeated it to the Jaguar.

"Senhor Onça," I said, "this man, who seems to have much authority, has said to the wild men that you have killed the chief in a fair fight, without using guns

or other white men's weapons, that even when you had your own ax in your hands you threw it away, that you won only by the power of your body, that you are the greatest fighter they have ever seen and that you are worthy to command such fighters as they are themselves. You are to be chief in place of the one who could not overcome you. Chief Jaguar, we salute you."

He was as astounded as I. He looked around at them and then back at me. He said:

"Glory be! All I wanted was a chance for me life and now I'm king of the cannibals! I can see in their faces that ye speak the truth. Holy Saint Pat! Can ye beat it?"

"I am unable to beat it, *senhor*," I answered, and he grinned as if I had said something funny.

He turned and grinned at all of them, and many of them smiled back, the tight-lipped smile of fighting men to a fighting man. Then he spoke:

"All right, me lads. So be it. I will be yer chief, and if any man thinks he is as good as me, let him step out now."

I repeated this last and the old man said it over. He looked the ugly club-bearer in the eye as he said it, but that one slunk away behind some others, and several of them laughed at him in a nasty way. Then I told the old man:

"We want our weapons and all that we brought with us and we want food. See that we have them at once."

He nodded and we all went into the big house.

There many women and children crowded around us, but the men roughly shoved them aside and led us to a big hammock which had been that of the chief. It was adorned with the feathers of the toucan and other brilliant birds. Under it and around it on the floor were hides of the jaguar and the sloth. The old man told us that another hammock would be arranged there for me, so that I could be near my comrade at all times.

Our weapons were brought and soon much food was put before us by a number of women who stood and watched us eat. For that matter, everybody watched us eat—men, women and children. As we had not eaten for some time, we now devoured an enormous

meal. This seemed to please everybody and they told each other that we were mighty men. When at last we could swallow no more we looked around us and talked over the situation.

"Well, lad," said the Jaguar, "this is far and away the biggest bunk-house I ever got into. Look at all the hammicks, will ye, slung criss-cross around the place. Must be a good two hundred Injuns livin' here. I hope to gosh they don't all snore at night."

"How are you feeling after the fight?" I asked.

"Barrin' a few scratches and wrenches, I'm feelin' good. That big bum had an iron jaw. I never in me life walloped a guy so hard and had him come back for more. 'Twas a good thing I had me boots on. But I'm wonderin' how to hold down this new job. I feel in me bones that there's some hocus-pocus about this thing and that the old geezer that made me boss of the works has got somethin' up his sleeve. Because why? Because I'm a white man and these jaspers have got no use for white men in the long run. So, Larry, as chief bruiser of this rough joint, I command ye to get next to old 'Fox-Face' and find out what's his lay."

THAT was just what I had been thinking of doing. So I called the old man over and soon learned why he hated the dead chief. There had been two big tribes, or families, of Indians which lived not far from each other in their big *malocas*, as these tribal houses were called. They had been fairly friendly, fighting each other no more than neighboring Indians usually do. Then a great sickness had come upon them and when it ended many had died, so that neither tribe was as strong as it should be.

Since it was not well that they be weak, it was decided that they should combine and live all together in one *maloca*, with the two chiefs ruling together. But a tribe, *senhores*, is like any other family: there must be only one head, and this the wild men soon learned.

Before long an accident had befallen one of these chiefs and he was killed. The other chief thus became the ruler of all. But, though this thing had hap-

pened very mysteriously, so that nobody could say just how it came about, the followers of the dead chief doubted that it was an accident and in their hearts believed it had been cunningly planned. The old man who talked with me believed this too and was the more bitter about it because the chief who died so suddenly was his own relation by blood. Now he was glad that the ruler had been killed by a man greater than himself, and since the Jaguar was of neither party but came from afar he might rule justly and make the tribe mighty through his strong leadership. He himself, who knew all the inner workings of their organization, would advise this mighty chief as to what men could be trusted best and tell him of other things that would help him.

This was what the crafty old man told me and I was not so simple that I did not see his object in it all. I told the Jaguar what had been said, however, without expressing my own opinion. He sat looking shrewdly at the old schemer and then he spoke:

"Pretty smooth! I'm to be the head of this gang because I'm there with the rough stuff, but the real boss will be old Fox-Face here. Tell him I take orders from nobody, and order him to have these cat-skins taken out from under me hammick. The bare ground is good enough for me to put me boots on."

The only part of this that I repeated was that concerning the jaguar-hides, for I knew it would not be well to make the old man our enemy. Indeed, I told him the mighty white chief would rule firmly but wisely and would talk further with him later. He nodded, well pleased, and then explained that the skins were not rugs for the feet, but were the beds of the chief's wives, who slept on the ground around his hammock. He added also that, since the former chief now was dead, these wives would become the property of the new chief.

The Jaguar bounced clear out of his hammock when I told him this.

"Mother of Moses!" he groaned. "Now what have I got meself into? Wives, d'ye say? How many of them?"

I asked the old man. He turned, gave an order and soon a number of women came and stood in line before us. The

younger ones seemed timid, but the older women stared boldly at us and smiled, showing their sharply filed teeth. The "mighty white chief" groaned again.

"Thirteen of 'em! No wonder the chief was out of luck. It's like I told ye, lad, the Flynns are always hoppin' into trouble. I bet this is the thirteenth of the month and a Friday at that! What will I do with these females?"

I told him I did not know but that he was chief and could do as he pleased. I also added that some of them were quite good-looking.

"True enough," he admitted. "If they'd put on some clothes, fix their hair and maybe take a bath, they wouldn't be half bad. But they're nothin' at all in my young life. Thirteen wives is just fourteen more than I want. What does old Foxy Grandpa take me for—a Turk?"

The old man spoke to me again and when I turned back to the Jaguar I could not help grinning.

"He says that if these are not enough for so mighty a chief, there are plenty of girls who have not yet taken a man and you can choose as many more as you like," I told him.

He opened his mouth, shut it again and sat down hard.

"The devil fly away with 'em!" he exploded. "And with that old timber-wolf too!"

He gave a wave of the arm that told them all to be gone. They obeyed, though some of the bolder ones seemed to want to linger.

"Now this is a fine kettle of fish!" he complained. "I've had women fasten themselves to me before and I had the devil's own time gittin' rid of 'em. I can handle men and mules but not women. If I could only treat 'em rough, like some guys do, it might be easy, but I ain't built that way. Now how the blazes will I keep 'em away from me?"

I looked at the women, waiting near-by and watching him, and I could see that they did not intend to stay away very long. I thought, too, that it might cause trouble if he refused to accept them and I could not think of any way to settle the matter so that every one would be satisfied. Finally he grinned and sat back as if relieved.

"Now I've got it," he declared. "Larry, ye're a good-lookin' lad. I'll just give ye all the ladies. They'll like ye fine."

"You will do nothing of the kind, *senhor*," I cried. "I am not the chief here and I will not have the chief's wives—or any others."

"Oh, yes, ye will," he said. "Be a good feller and help me out. Ye may not be chief but I'll make ye—let's see now—I'll make ye minister extraordinary and plenipotenshary."

"What is that?" I wanted to know.

"Well, ye're a minister and that's a— a minister. And if ye can keep thirteen women happy, ye sure will be extraordinary. And this plenipotenshary thing is—oh, it means more power to ye. When ye git down-hearted, just remember ye're a plenipotenshary and cheer up."

"It would take much more than that to cheer me up, *Senhor Jaguar*, and I will not have anything to do with it."

HE argued and threatened, but I kept on refusing and told him I would fight him before I would take those women. Finally he said:

"If I didn't like ye so well, old-timer, I'd beat yer head off for mutiny. But now tell me, what will we do with 'em? Can we stall 'em off for a while?"

I thought and suddenly remembered that the full moon was just past. I called the old man and told him that, for a time, the great white chief would be too busy with the affairs of the tribe to think about anything so unimportant as women and that he would make no decision in the matter of wives until the next full moon. In the meantime he did not wish to be bothered by any women whatever, and those who now had their beds under his hammock must find places elsewhere.

He turned at once and ordered the women to remove the jaguar-skins. They did so, looking rather sour. Some of the other women, I noticed, appeared quite pleased by this, especially the younger ones, who seemed to have no men, and I foresaw that there would be many candidates for wives when the next full moon came. But for the time, at least, the problem was solved.

"Man, ye're a great little fixer!" said the Jaguar. "I hereby make ye the min-

ister of public works. By next full-moon we can fix up some hocus-pocus or other."

I told him I did not intend to be there when the next full moon came, if I could get away sooner. He scowled and told me I must stay until he was ready to go too, and that he intended to stay for some time.

"I've got no place to go," he said, "and, barrin' them sharp-toothed women, I'm goin' to have the time of me life bossin' these rough-necks. There's another thing, Larry: These Injuns likely know where there's gold, and maybe we can git 'em to show us; so carry on, old minister extraordinary and so forth, and we'll make ourselves big men in this neck of the woods."

This did not please me. I wished to be back in charge of my own men at the rubber district. So, though I said no more, I made my plans to escape whenever the right time should come.

IN this I was helped by the Jaguar's hunting habits. He did not loll around in his hammock; he was too restless for that. There was little to do, for the old man whom he called Fox-Face really ruled the tribe now, as we had foreseen, and, though the Jaguar settled a number of disputes among the men in his rough-and-ready fashion, time went slowly.

He was too wise to question them about gold until he had become better acquainted with them and more sure of his own position, so there was nothing for an active man to do but to hunt animals in the forest. In doing this he went alone or with me. At first the old man would have had other hunters go with us, but this the Jaguar would not allow.

"Ye have called me Jaguar, Larry," he growled, "and a jaguar I am, perhaps. Anyway, I'm a jaguar in me huntin', and jaguars don't hunt in packs. I hunt alone. Any ugly Injun that I catch snoopin' around me in the woods, I'll knock his block off. Tell old Foxy that. If he gits gay about it I'll knock his block off, too."

So we hunted alone. At first we were followed and watched, we knew, though we could not catch any one spying on us. Then, one day, we went out together and lay concealed, waiting to entrap the man

or men who might be sneaking behind us. After a time we sprang out on that ugly one who had carried a club. He had come stealing along as silently as a moving shadow. The Jaguar gave him a terrible beating and then dragged him back to the *maloca* and beat him again before all the others. When he threw the battered Indian aside, he roared to all that this was only a sample of what would happen to the next man who dared to follow us and disturb our hunting. From that time on no man shadowed us.

The day came when he and I hunted deep in the jungle, each by himself as usual, and met again at a place agreed upon. There I said quietly:

"Senhor Onça, chief of the *barbaros*, I am now going away. The time of the full moon is drawing near and I have stayed here over-long. Though I dislike to leave you, I am going now while I can, for I may not have so good a chance again."

He stared at me for a time without answering; then he said:

"I don't blame ye, lad. I'm gittin' sick of this meself, and that full moon is likely to bring us both bad luck. I told ye before we ever saw these that all women were trouble-makers and I feel in me bones that the grinnin' hussies will wreck us yet. Still, I don't like to go skulkin' away like I was afraid. Tell me, now, is there anything a jaguar will run from?"

"Yes," I said. "He will run from peccaries."

"Peccaries? The sharp-toothed pigs that rip ye to pieces? Sure, I've been tryin' to think what the women back yonder reminded me of, and that's it—peccaries, with their pointed teeth and all. So even the jaguar will run from them, will he? And ye think no less of him for that?"

"Surely not," I told him. "He would die like a fool if he did not evade them, for they would do just what you said—rip him to pieces. Of one peccary he has no fear; he kills and eats it; but when a herd of them surrounds him he has to climb a tree quickly or be destroyed."

"Then that settles it," he declared. "Nobody can ever say a wild tom cat has

got more sense than I have. Them peccary women have got me up a tree already, and I'm goin' to jump out of it right now. Come on, old plenipotenshary, let's beat it while the goin' is good."

And so we turned and left the wild men's country.

For days we traveled hard and fast, knowing that when the savages discovered our desertion they would follow in an infuriated swarm, armed with poisoned arrows and darts, and would show us no mercy if they caught us. We had only a few cartridges left between us, but with these we killed game enough to keep us alive.

At length we struck a small river and, though we had only my *machete* with which to cut—for the Jaguar's ax was back among the Indians—we hacked down some trees and bound them with vines into a small raft, chopped a couple of poles and pushed off down the stream. Neither of us knew where the river went but we did know that all rivers there run finally to the Amazon, so we felt that in time we should come out somewhere. It was only a few days before we found ourselves at a place I knew and met men who gave us food and a canoe. Soon after that we reached the headquarters of my old *coronel*.

WHEN I told my tale, the *coronel* sat back and laughed as I never saw him laugh before. Then he said:

"Senhor Jaguar Flynn, you are a wise man that you abandoned the peccaries before they turned on you, and a very lucky man too, in spite of what you say about the ill luck of the family of Flynn.

"You have lost your minister plenipotentiary, it is true, because I intend to

keep him myself; he is a sort of plenipotentiary of mine, also, and I think I need him more than you do. You have done me a great favor, *senhor*, in bringing back to me one of my most valued men, so, if there is anything I can do for you in return, you have only to name it."

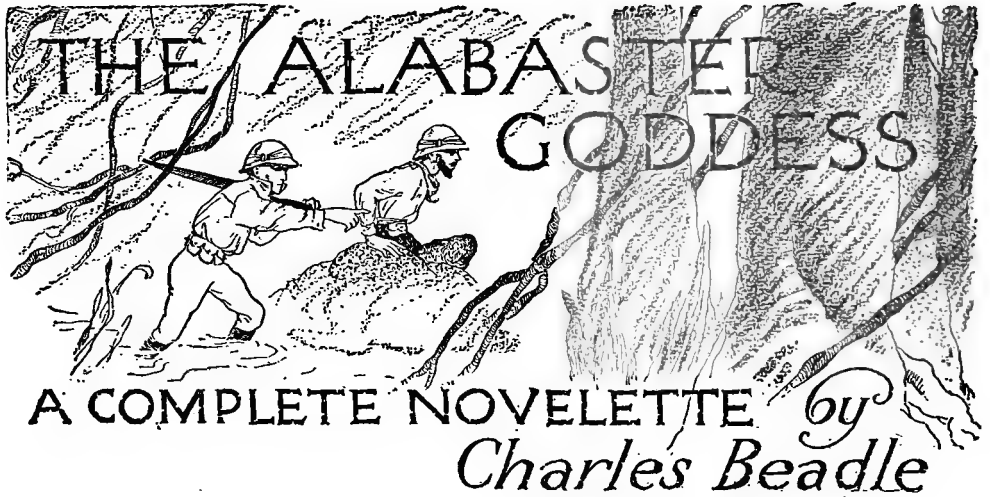
The Jaguar grinned back at him and said:

"Well, old-timer, me and Larry here sure had a great trip together, and I like yer country fine. But still I wouldn't mind seein' the good old States again, so, if ye feel that one good trip deserves another, ye might slip me a ticket back to the U. S. A. I suppose that means I'll have to put on a shirt and sew up the holes in me pants, because the steamer folks are kind of fussy that way. If ye've got a shirt that ain't workin' now, maybe I could use it."

The *coronel*, who is very wealthy, laughed again and said that perhaps he could find another shirt. So, when the next river-boat came, the Jaguar shook my hand hard and stepped aboard, dressed in the best clothing the old gentleman could find for him, and with much money in his pocket.

While the boat steamed away down the river I thought of how I had first seen him, half naked, floating on a log, ready to attack anything that dared oppose him. I suppose he gave no thought to what was past, but only looked ahead. At any rate, as the boat disappeared around the first bend there came floating back a deep, hoarse roar—his call to the fighting animals of his own country, far north of the Amazon:

"Hoo-wah! Hunt yer holes, ye timber-wolves and mountain-cats! Walloper Flynn is hittin' the long trail home!"



THE ALABASTER GODDESS

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE *by* Charles Beadle

Author of "Witch-Doctors," "The White Frog," etc.

A GAINST the western sun the hairy lip of the Balegga hills cast violet shadows upon a brown patch in the yellow grass, a village of small conical huts whose ragged thatches trailed to the ground. Around the huts pecked tiny fowls, dozed scraggy goats and played and sprawled dirty children. As the womenfolk ground ropoko seed between two stones, the ivory disks, about three inches in diameter, inserted in their upper lips, wagged as they chattered, as if in rhythm to the swing of their pendulous breasts.

At one end of the village, before a square hut less disheveled than the others, squatted the chief, a wizened old man whose scrawny hands whittled bamboo grass-stems into arrows. He gazed persistently across the undulating hillside to a spot where, in a deck-chair before one of two weather-beaten green tents, sat a white man, a gaunt American with a fair, unkempt beard, wearing pajamas a foot too short for his lanky limbs. He was moodily sucking a pipe as he stared at the sheen of Lake Albert, one of the many lakes exposed by that vast gash which splits Africa from the Nile to the Zambesi.

The grass on the ridge of the hills was silhouetted like spear-heads of sepia against the crimson glare. The snowy peaks of the Gamballagalla in the south-

east were turned to bloody spikes. The distant lake deepened to pewter; was swallowed in the deep violet mist of the equatorial twilight, and, as swiftly as if a colored curtain had been withdrawn, appeared the hard stars in their hot, velvet bed.

To the man lounging in the chair came a native from the other tent, behind which showed the orange glow of the kitchen fire. He placed a guttering candle upon the camp table and set before the white man a dinner of stewed fowl. The bearded man ate mechanically, as one who must eat something, drank boiled tea and then sat back and smoked. He swore hopelessly and eventually sprawled upon the camp-bed, too indifferent to adjust the mosquito net.

In the morning, as the sun climbed listlessly from the steaming lake, so rose Bob Vardon to lounge in pajamas in the deck-chair through yet another day. A year ago he had given up shaving and lately even trimming his beard. Ivory trading was a sorry job and lonely.

After some years' trading in the Congo the advance of the Belgian administration, which sought to monopolize both rubber and ivory for the benefit of King Leopold and his friends, had forced him into the Balegga region, the watershed of the Congo and the Nile which, fortunately for free adventurers, had no settled boundary between British terri-

tory and the Belgian. The region formed a broad band running from the Lado enclave to Lake Tanganyika, over which was no man's interfering jurisdiction, and was at the same time on the fringe of the mighty Ituri forests, an abode of elephants beyond the dreams of a hunter's avarice.

Although the Balegga uplands, above the lakes and pestilential forests, were nearly free of mosquitoes and other pests and were comparatively healthy, the hills looked bare and dismal and the Bambiba tribe was poor, given to half-hearted agriculture. Their wretchedness was exemplified by the lip-disk, an ornament so devised as to make their women unattractive to their neighbors and the slave traders, so it was said.

Through the forest to the west, hunting secretly and buying by stealth, Bob had his agents bringing the tusks to his headquarters in neutral territory for shipment through Uganda to the coast market. He made fair money at the cost of a tedious life that weakened the moral fiber of the man, bringing him to an indifference concerning manners and self-respect.

Bob knew that he was not made for an anchorite or hermit and he feared the degeneracy that was creeping upon him, the degeneracy that revealed itself so often in the white man buried in the tropical jungle. Yet, lured by the usual mirage of making a stipulated sum, he intended to remain for just two more seasons and then to leave in search of joys that he had all but forgotten.

ONE afternoon, winding up the trail from the valley of the Semliki far beneath, there came a caravan which brought a being at whom the trader at first grinned derisively. The stranger, after greeting him in a languid Oxford accent and asking permission to pitch his camp close by, had introduced himself by a name that made Bob Vardon blink. The pallid, dainty man, clad exquisitely in Sackville Street hunting clothes and wearing an enormous helmet instead of the ordinary double-felt Tirai hat, was an explorer of world reputation.

Impressed by his name, charmed by his manners and gloomily amused by his faint idiosyncrasies, Bob made every pos-

sible effort at hospitality with a thin larder of goat and fowl. With that suave *savoir faire* which Bob could not help admiring, the Englishman, however, adroitly contrived to furnish the culinary entertainment from his own supplies.

During the best dinner that Bob had enjoyed for many a dreary day, Claude Stratton chattered lightly of everything under the sun, so that the tongue-stiffened host had nought to do but listen to a gift that perhaps had had much to do with the Englishman's fame.

It was not until Stratton began to discuss local environment, however, that Bob's interest awakened to conscious excitement. Stratton had never been in that part of the country before, but he had crossed Africa from east to west below the Gamballagalla and Lake Albert Edward. Tentatively he suggested that Bob might have heard of a legend concerning a tribe which lived within the mountains apart from any other tribe, a people from whom no stranger who was daring enough to seek them ever returned.

In the wilderness of Bob's existence the advent of this man and the legend, or perhaps the manner in which it was told, seemed as the first draught of water at an oasis. Eagerly watching the shadows cast by the guttering candle on the sallow lean face of the Englishman, Bob sat entranced through the warm evening, growing more and more aware of a queer sensation, as if a magician were pumping life-blood into veins shrunken for need of the blood of adventure.

The story Stratton told came from an old Arab who had traded in Uganda for many years, long before Stanley had crossed the site where they were now encamped. The Arab had shown Stratton a bracelet of soft gold upon which was beaten a design of possibly Phœnician origin or at any rate one allied to the ancient Egyptian. This bangle had been found upon the corpse of an old man who had been slain, said the natives, by pigmies of the Ituri forests. The dead man belonged, averred the members of the Arab's caravan, to no known tribe.

They had been tremendously excited about the affair and one at length had told him the legend current not among the natives of the vicinity of the moun-

tains, as might be expected, but among the Nubians: In the recesses of the Mountains of the Moon, as the Gamballagalla were called by the people of the north, there lived a tribe whose chieftainess was white in body and hair, whom it was death for any man save the priests of the tribe to approach.

"But why didn't the Arab go after and explore?" demanded Bob. "Surely the gold should have attracted him."

"Precisely," agreed Stratton. "Naturally enough I ventured to suggest the same idea, but the old man informed me that many years ago—in the time of his great-grandfather, he gave me to understand quite distinctly—an expedition had been sent to investigate, but it had never returned. This, he also informed me, corroborates the story which other tribes have told."

"Mighty queer," commented Bob. "I've been around here and Uganda for years, but I've never heard a murmur of the story."

"Neither did I when I passed to the south, you know," said Stratton. "I attempted to follow the river, the Kakibi as they call the Semliki there, but I found that the reports of the impassability were apparently true. The Congo hills close in upon the southern end of the Ruwenzori."

"Gamballagalla, you mean," corrected Bob. "Nobody around here ever heard of that name, and, by the way, they call the Semliki the Kakibi here, as well."

"Well, Gamballagalla then. That river is said to disappear into earth, to be swallowed by the mountain spirit, you know, which probably means a gorge—like your Colorado Cañon, what? Anyway, no white has ever been through. And the Ituri forest, they say, sweeps directly across, a few thousand feet up the Gamballagalla slopes. Now, as far as I could gather, the legend has it that this mysterious tribe lives in or beyond this forest belt. However, that's all very vague. The only fact that I could elicit was that the body with the Phœnician bangle was found on the north—that is this—side of the er—enchanted forest."

"As a matter of fact I came here to ask you if you've ever heard any hint of such a legend. You know it's quite

native-like, don't you know, to have such a legend under tabu, because of the fear of increasing the wrath of the spirits by mentioning—er—even the supposititious facts. D'you take much interest in local folklore and that sort of thing?"

"Folklore? Well, no; I don't," admitted Bob. "At least, not much. Naturally, having nothing to do but sit around, I listen to any old yarn going about. Of course I get it second hand, as I only speak Luganda and Kiswahili. The devil himself couldn't speak all the lingoes of the tribes hereabouts."

"PRECISELY, yet you know it's a great pity. I had hoped that you would be able to help me. Perhaps, after all, it may be merely a yarn, what? Sounds somewhat far-fetched, don't you think?"

"Dunno," said Bob meditatively. "Gold was there, you said?"

"Well, so the Arab inferred from the sight of the bracelet, erroneously, perhaps. He wouldn't hear of making any attempt to seek it. The story that no one ever returns had affected him considerably; must have done so to keep an Arab away from gold or ivory."

"Ivory?" demanded Bob alertly.

"Oh, yes; he also said that there is supposed to be a valley which elephants choose—er—as a cemetery—in which, in fact, animals and men are bewitched; he inferred that by witchcraft they are compelled to seek this particular valley in which to die. Of course one has heard from various alleged authorities of this—er—peculiar idiosyncrasy developed by the elephant in the matter of choosing cemeteries. Still, that is of little interest."

"It is the legend of the white chieftainess which so absorbs me. From what I could gather from the Arab, she appeared to be on the goddess plane. You know the king-god system prevalent in Africa, of course? What is so intriguing is the idea of the white goddess. Where could she have come from? Or is it merely a symbol? You will readily see that she could scarcely have been one woman, as she was alive in the time of Ali's great-grandfather—unless, indeed, she be dead now. Of course Rider Haggard used the fictional idea of a white race in the interior of Africa, as you well

know, but Africa has been fairly well explored since those days. Besides, he merely intended the story from the fictional point of view, don't you think? Most interesting. Sorry you can't give me any data at all. Have a cigar?"

"Thanks," said Bob, accepting one absent-mindedly.

"Rather disappointing, in fact," added Stratton, nipping the point of the cigar. "Great pity you people don't take more interest in anthropology, folklore and all that sort of thing."

"Haven't got time. But you said ivory—say, are you going to look up this white goddess?"

"Yes, certainly. I am determined to solve the problem."

"In spite of the fact that nobody ever returns?" demanded Bob, sitting bolt upright.

"Precisely," assented Stratton. "That's the most interesting part, don't you think?"

In the glow of the candle Bob saw the glint of teeth in the ecstatic smile of the born adventurer confronted by a hundred-to-one chance against surviving.

"Oh, yes," Stratton added, blinking his eyes, "most precisely."

Bob smoked hard for a minute or two, staring at the stranger, who, with a shadow of the same smile upon his delicate lips, seemed lost in dreams of discovery. From over the hills came the faint throb of a drum, a mere vibration of the still air.

"I'm through with this!" exclaimed Bob suddenly. "Your story's put life into me. I think I must have been dying of boredom. Frankly, I'm after the ivory; you're after the white goddess——"

"Really!" objected Stratton, smiling dryly.

"Well," grinned Bob, "the folklore business then. I know this country hereabouts, and what's more, I'm known to the people. If anybody can get together reliable porters and all that, I can. I got the story from you, so my hands are tied. Get me? But I'm crazy to go. I'd risk forty lives to prevent being here another year or so, and anyway— Will you let me come along? I'm quite willing to put up my share. Will you let me join you?"

The little man stared at him speculatively.

"Why not?" said he slowly. "Er—very glad, I'm sure."

II

A WEEK later Bob and Stratton were encamped at Kavalli's on the lower slopes of the Balegga hills, a small village whose chieftainness was the widow of a Sudanese, a relic of Emin Pasha's equatorial empire. Although they interrogated the ancient lady, she denied any knowledge of the legend by fact or hearsay.

Bob felt a little discouraged and inclined to think that, after all, the affair would turn out to be a waste of time. Not so Stratton, however, who, from a deep study of folklore in all parts of the world, knew that stranger stories than this had been proved true, and that it was quite feasible to suppose, as he had suggested, that such a legend, inspiring fear in the savage, would most surely be under tabu.

When the project of the expedition was brought up, however, and the lady requested to use her influence to obtain trustworthy guides, which she had often done for the usual consideration for Bob's caravans of ivory, she suddenly became taciturn, refused to attempt to aid them at all and, on being pressed, stated that the forest through which the Semliki flowed was so full of the most malignant spirits that no native would undertake the passage. Then both men decided that she knew something, if not all, about the legend. After a long *shauri*, Bob tried to loosen her tongue by bribery, but, although usually amenable to such argument for almost any act or information, real or imaginary, she remained obdurate.

Next morning they discovered that every one of the carriers whom they had brought from the hills had deserted without waiting for their payment in trade cloth, an exceedingly good sign that there was some truth in the story and an evidence that the local chieftainness had been talking.

They resorted to bribes, larger in magnitude, but with no effect. According to her sullen mutter, a local wizard had, for

some reason unknown to her, announced that the two whites had committed or wished to commit—the same to the savage mind—an act which would incite the wrath of the river-god of the Semliki. An attempt now to persuade, cajole or bribe any man of the surrounding country to assist would be futile, for, although they loved money or its equivalent, they feared far more the ill-will of spirits.

The position seemed serious as far as their present plight was concerned, but promising in regard to the outcome of their quest. Late that evening they sat discussing ways and means. Their personal servants, who fortunately came from a distant tribe on the east coast, were the only men who had not bolted. These few men could not possibly carry a quarter of the camp equipment and supplies to the river, some fifteen miles away. In the hope that men would be forthcoming for that innocent job, they decided to announce that they wished to return to Uganda. As an alternative, they planned that one of them would go on alone and endeavor to recruit men of another tribe, taking every precaution not to mention their unholy intentions. In the morning, when they again approached the old woman, they learned that the savage, surrounded by a world of innumerable malignant spirits, is a suspicious animal. She promised, however, to send out runners to call the people together. Whether she actually did so or not they never knew, but no male above fourteen years old appeared.

On reflection they decided that, should either one succeed in recruiting fresh porters from Uganda, those would inevitably be contaminated by the local tribes. Yet, in spite of the impasse, Bob was jubilant. Something of great importance must be behind all this pother. The question was: How were they to get away?

"It looks good to me," said Bob that night, referring to the legend.

"Precisely," agreed Stratton. "Er—on reflection it appears to me that the only way out, except sitting here for a few months so that they may live down their suspicions enough to aid us as far as Uganda, is to hump our own guns and make the servants carry the Wolse-

ley valises (bed and mosquito-net combined) as far as the river and trust to our guns for food. Possibly, in fact probably, we shall have to do that sooner or later, for evidently we'll never find any men to enter the tabu country with us."

"Yes," agreed Bob, observing the group of servants chattering around the fire. "I guess you've got it. What's more, we'd better get a hitch on these fellows before they, too, move on."

"Precisely," concurred Stratton. "I was about to suggest a similar proposition. And by the way—" glancing at the milky flood pouring over the eastern stars—"the moon is rising. We'll rope these chaps in and start in about two hours. We ought to make the river by sunrise."

THEIR suspicions concerning the matter under discussion among their servants was justified, for, as they strolled casually over to the fire, the boys immediately took alarm at the demeanor of their masters and leaped to their feet with the obvious intention of bolting into the bush. A sharp command backed by the gleam of a revolver turned the flight into a clamor. By their wild protestations that they had never had any desire to leave their masters, whom they revered more than their own chiefs, was their guilt betrayed. Cowed and puzzled, they were compelled to obey the orders to pack instantly the chosen articles of camp furniture.

By the time the work was accomplished and Bob had informed the old chieftainess, sitting in her compound watching and listening to the commotion in the white man's camp, that they were leaving the remainder of the equipment in her care, the moon had turned the distant Semliki into a faint ribbon of turquoise.

When the boys' worst fears were realized by an order to shoulder the packs and march, a wild lamentation broke out, for any native would rather face wild elephants or buffaloes than brave the malignant spirits that haunt the night. Even the dignity of acting as porter was swamped by their superstitious fears, but both Stratton and Bob knew how to handle natives.

In five minutes the big Munyamwezi cook, nigh blubbering with fright, trotting close upon the heels of Stratton, took the trail with a valise upon his head. Stratton himself was carrying two guns and three full bandoliers of cartridges. Shuffling behind, until one load nearly bumped the one ahead, came the six others with Bob in the rear, laden with two guns and as much condensed food as he could well carry.

As they struck the open veldt, a wailing cry arose from the village. One of the boys started to reply but a curt "*didi-malla!*" from Stratton deprived the old woman of the information demanded. Down the winding trail, like a procession of mumbling ghosts, went the little caravan.

As they reached the lowlands, the grassy hillocks gave place to an undulating plain covered with scattered trees which, to the amateur porters, sheltered demons innumerable and vengeful. Each one complained bitterly of the injustice of their masters, who, as they believed, always carried the most powerful charms, while they, the servants, had not even been given an opportunity to procure the special magic from the local witch-doctor.

At intervals of about an hour by Stratton's luminous watch, they halted for ten minutes. Although the boys were slightly consoled by the promise that if they lived through the terrible ordeal by night they would each receive a generous present, every now and again a shiver of terror would run moaningly through the tiny caravan as some sleeping animal was startled into flight.

At last they reached the alluvial floor of the corridor of the Semliki valley, where the air was as hot as a boiler-room. The grass became taller and more menacing in the moonlight; euphorbia assumed fantastic and goblin-like shapes and pointed terrible arms; odd groups of borassus palms seemed conclaves of witches; solitary ones appeared as if in terrified flight before some hidden horror. Startled birds screamed harsh warnings of disaster.

Suddenly from the left came a sound like distant thunder. As the swish of grass grew louder the Munyamwezi leader behind Stratton squawked—

"*Mvoo-booi!*"

Instantly the loads were plumped on to the trail one after the other.

"Look out!" yelled Stratton as a dark solid form loomed like a runaway locomotive over the spot where the porters had been.

Bob fired his revolver, but he might as well have shot at an armored car as at the rhinoceros which disappeared as swiftly as it had come. For a moment they stood listening to the swish of the grass; then Bob swore eloquently, ending with the comment that they would never see their servants again.

"Precisely," agreed Stratton without bitterness.

"The devils will run until they're tired," lamented Bob.

"By no means," said his partner. "They will lie *perdu* in the grass until dawn and then they'll begin running, — 'em!"

Bob muttered angrily and unloaded himself of his burden.

"We'd better try to hunt up some of 'em anyway," he suggested. "The beast won't come back. He's down wind."

The rhinoceros will blindly charge any smell—even his own dung, it is said—but immediately the scent is lost he will pull up and begin peaceably to browse or slumber again, wondering possibly what the — he did it for.

LEAVING the loads where they had been dropped, the two began to cast in circles in the direction in which the boys had fled. But to find a native who did not wish to be discovered, in that tangle of grass and shrub, was no easy matter. Presently Bob, despairing of finding even one of the boys, stopped to listen. Glancing casually up to see how far on her road the moon had gone, he saw a human form fondly hugging a slender branch of a tree, silhouetted against the green velvet sky. Bob stalked grimly toward the fugitive, who, as his keen ears caught the swish of grass, let out a muffled yelp of mingled terror and delight.

"Come down out of that, you son of a *shenzie*" (savage—used in contempt), commanded Bob.

"Eh, Bwana Bob!" pleaded the object, the whites of eyes glimmering.

"Where is the black devil who chased us?"

"It was only a rhinoceros, you fool! *Jangu mangu!*" (Come down instantly.)

"Nay, *bwana*, everybody knows that animals are possessed of devils by night!"

"Come down, you cowardly old woman!"

"Nay, *bwana*! In the morning when the devils are gone," protested the Munyamwezi cook, wriggling farther out on the branch. "I am no woman. Thou knowest, *bwana*, when the sun is there I would kill any rhinoceros with my hands. I am a great hunter."

"You sure are!" agreed Bob. "But all the same if you don't come down I'll drop you." He flashed the revolver. "*Fahamshi?*" (Understand?)

"*Bwana!*" wailed the man as he began to wriggle cautiously toward the trunk. Then he stopped and his eyes gleamed as he shot out a hand pointing to the west. "He comes again!" he gasped. "*Ai-ee!*"

Turning on his heel, Bob heard the ominous swish of grass and the thud of hoofs. Through an opening in the bush he caught a glimpse of a bulk pallid in the moonlight. In three seconds Bob had joined the cook in the tree, his legs almost brushing the back of a buffalo as the beast threw up his great head with a snort of rage.

"Did I not tell you, *bwana*," wailed the man dismally, "that all the devils are abroad this night? The old woman has sent them after us! *Aiee! Aiee!*"

"*Didimalla!*" commanded Bob angrily and swore at the indignity of his own position. The buffalo, unlike the rhinoceros, takes a very active and continuous interest in his friends; if wounded or annoyed, he will often pretend to go away and then, behind a bush or other convenient shelter, will lie in wait. Charging with lowered head, he is no easy shot, for the conformation of the skull is apt to ricochet the bullet.

Unslinging his gun, Bob proceeded to wriggle into a position along a branch from which he could obtain a sight on the snorting and pawing beast beneath. Unheeding the whimpering protests of the Munyamwezi against killing a beast which was obviously bewitched, Bob succeeded in getting a sight on the buffalo's

withers and fired. The shot reverberated through the veldt, awakening a hurricane of swishing grass and squawks of startled birds. The brute, snorting furiously, pitched sideways, recovered his hind legs and sought to rise.

"Dirty work!" muttered Bob disgustedly. "Smashed his shoulder, missed the spine."

He fired again at an easy heart shot. This time the buffalo grunted, rose half way on its fore-feet convulsively and collapsed. Bob slid down the trunk. As he examined the brute cautiously, for buffaloes are known to sham dead, there came a hail from Stratton.

"All right!" shouted Bob. "Coming!"

This time the cook, still whimpering protests, descended and marched ahead of Bob back to the deserted loads, on one of which sat Stratton smoking a cigaret.

"What was the matter?"

"Bagged a buffalo and one boy!" returned Bob. "What have you?"

"Not a bally man or beast, confound it all!" responded the Englishman languidly. "Have a cigaret?"

"Thanks," said Bob, squatting on a Wolseley valise with their one captive at his feet. "We'll have to stick here till sunrise."

III

WHEN the green of the moon changed to the pallid orange of dawn and the distant snow peaks of the Gamballagalla were tinted crimson, the two white men left their seats upon the loads and, taking the Munyamwezi with them, proceeded to search again, hoping to intercept some if not all of the six missing servants. But whether the boys, as was quite probable, heard them approaching or had indeed run some considerable distance during the night, pursued, at least in imagination, by the black devil inside the rhinoceros, they could not know. At any rate they did not even catch a glimpse of one of them.

They returned to the deserted loads, set the cook to making a fire and proceeded anew to discuss how they could get to the river, which, they reckoned, was not more than seven or eight miles distant across the plain.

After coffee and biscuits they had ar-

rived at the conclusion that the only method was for Bob to go with the Munyamwezi to the river where they knew there was a village and there endeavor, by bribes or threats, to obtain sufficient porters. Accordingly Bob set off with the cook, who, now that the spirits of the night had disappeared, proceeded to develop the terrors of magic instilled by the old woman at Kavalli's. Though he had little choice in the matter, he was so sulky, however, that, upon arrival at the banks of the Semliki, Bob wisely decided to rely upon the chance that someone would understand Luganda if not Kiswahili, rather than trust the superstitious cook.

As Bob well knew, news of any importance is communicated from village to village in seemingly miraculous time, but as he had not heard any drums nor seen any beacon fires or smokes he hoped for the best.

As in most villages throughout central Africa, there is usually some one, most often the chief, who can speak Kiswahili—a mixture of Arabic and Bantu, which is the commercial language of Africa as far south as Tanganika. Both Stratton and Bob spoke Kiswahili and the latter Luganda as well. This particular village was upon the established trail to Uganda and, by chance, a gang of Wunyoro porters were preparing to cross in the canoe-ferry on their way home.

Immediately Bob found their headman and began bargaining for ten men to carry loads a day's march down the river, as far as a certain larger village where canoes might be had. Then he was confronted by another obstacle: how to pay them. Money of any nationality was useless to these people. The only form of currency in vogue was the cowrie shell—a string of a thousand is equivalent to about thirty cents. For five shells a native may buy enough food for a day. These were current only among natives accustomed to contact with whites or Arabs; otherwise cloth, copper wire, etc., is necessary.

The two loads of trade-cloth which they had brought from the Kavalli's was a dangerous minimum with which to start out into the wilderness. Bob could not send a note to the old lady at Kavalli's

ordering her to pay out a certain quantity of the goods left with her. For one thing, of course, she could not read, and, secondly, she would rather keep the goods on the happy chance that the white men would never return to claim them, a fate of which she, as a matter of fact, was confident.

Finally, noticing that the Wunyoro headman possessed an old Martini rifle, Bob decided with a grim smile that, as they were still in disputed territory belonging to no one, except the natives who of course did not count, and considering, under the circumstances, that he was justified in breaking the law, offered the headman twenty .45 revolver cartridges which would fit the Martini. That these cartridges were cordite and the headman's gun was built for black powder was an incident perhaps better overlooked, for the tropics are as unhealthy for the morals as for the body.

Although the wily young native effaced any trace of eagerness at the terms offered, he accepted with a very little bargaining. Thus it was that, in the blazing heat of midday, Bob returned with his headman and ten porters.

Under ordinary circumstances, considering the intense heat of the valley and their lack of sleep, they would have made camp at the nearest water, but, fearful of possible emissaries from the old woman of Kavalli's or of some of their servants turning up to scare the new porters with tales of magic, they decided to press on for a short march toward the river. A siesta was enjoyed by each man in turn, for the white men feared that, were all given freedom at once, the Munyamwezi cook would discourse upon the impiety of his masters. At four the brassy sun was lower in the incandescent sky but the heat was little less. However, as the new porters were fresh and the headman eager for his cartridges, they continued the *safari* and reached a fresh-water site—for the Semliki water is brackish like both the lakes, Albert and Edward—about six miles away, before the swift twilight shut down.

THROUGHOUT the day the Munyamwezi cook had retained his sullen demeanor. Fortunately, as he knew, no

word of the Wunyoro tongue, he was compelled to talk Kiswahili or Luganda with the porters, so that Bob could not fail to understand instantly should he make any attempt to communicate seditious information.

After their brief dinner, they decided, in order not to take any chances, that the cook should sleep between them and that they should keep watches. Twice during the night were their precautions proved necessary, but a sharp "*didimalla*" from Bob, who happened to be on guard, probably convinced the cook that the Wunyoro *shenzie* should be left to go to hell in their own particular manner and that, after all, it was an affair of no importance to a righteous but unfortunate Munyamwezi.

As the snowy peaks of the Gamballagalla, devoid of their usual cloud rings, were tinted with the ruby of dawn, the camp was astir. The sun rose swiftly over the Uganda plateau, seeming furiously angry in the tight, still air, as the porters took to the trail across the plain of cactus and euphorbia. As they marched, Stratton drew Bob's attention to the fact that the sepia shadows of night between the mountains and the Congo hills on the other side of the narrowing corridor had lost little of their density.

"Yes," assented Bob, "looks like the gathering of a — of a storm. From the few words I can gather, those fellows have been grumbling about it. They say around here that the storms are sent by the devil or a god, whichever you like, who lives in the mountains. We must try to make the village at any cost."

"Doubt it," said Stratton. "The air's like a room in a Turkish bath now. I can feel every hair on my head, by Jove. Saw some of these atmospheric storms while passing on the south side, but I suppose they're much worse here, with the abrupt changes in the altitudes. Phew!"

Ten minutes passed. Bob was well aware of the muttering in the ranks of the porters. The time came for the usual ten-minute spell, but Stratton suggested, and Bob concurred, that, if once they stopped, they would never get the men on the move again. Just then the headman came hurrying alongside. Pointing

to the sky-line of the south where the density of the mountains seemed continued around into the Congo hills in a blue wall, he demanded that they should halt. Bob shook his head. Telling Stratton to keep the road, he fell behind and ostentatiously drew his revolver.

"On to the river!" insisted Bob as the headman scowled and began anew to protest.

A cool puff of wind sighed about the grass as he spoke. The wall of the storm which seemed to have leaped up the corridor with incredible speed, swallowing half the range of the mountains and thickening to the solidity of basalt, was streaked with white.

The porters stopped in their tracks and dropped their loads. The air was so charged with electricity that the skin vibrated. Bob, who had never before been caught in one of these storms of the Semliki valley, began to argue with the men who, losing all fear of the dreaded revolver in the presence of a greater terror, ignored the threats and simultaneously threw themselves head foremost into the grass. Just as Stratton shouted a warning and imitated them, Bob was hurled a dozen paces as if struck upon the jaw by an angry god.

For a few moments he lay where he had fallen, seemingly paralyzed. He was conscious of a tingling in every inch of his body and in the arm which had held the revolver the pain was so acute that it amounted almost to agony. For a terrifying moment he thought that he had been blinded. Gradually, or so it appeared, he began to see a fringe of grass and a fantastic euphorbia which stood out like a blasted tree against the purple sky. Another convulsion deprived him of his breath. Gasping and blinking in what seemed an ocean of water, he lay flat, conscious that he could not move his right side and that he was alone in the scarlet black of a universe that was being torn to pieces.

The violent tingling and smarting was renewed. Grass stems, quivering violently, appeared against purple nothingness. Vague ideas that Stratton and all the porters had been killed floated dimly across his mind, mingling with the terror that he was paralyzed. Time and space had been reduced to terms of vibra-

tion. Again the universe was destroyed in a blaze of light and a deluge of warm water. The simultaneous convulsion stretched him like a fish on a bank. Slowly grass spears and charcoal euphoria, decked with quivering pearls, came back against the purple world which seemed, as he looked, to be turning to an intense greenish-black of putrefaction.

He yelled to Stratton. Then a new terror bestrode him. He could not hear his own voice. He was stone deaf. The purple world appeared to close upon him like a squeezed bag upon a rat. Then, as suddenly as the opening of a camera shutter, he was blinded with the yellow glare of the sun.

HE sat up blinking. The mauve of the towering mountains and the Congo hills was shimmering in the heat haze. To the north the storm seemed tearing up the corridor of the Semliki valley, vomiting light with the speed and density of a blue rhinoceros. From the long dripping grass appeared one woolly head after another. In the midst of them arose Stratton's helmet, gray with water. Bob saw his lips move. He called out. He was conscious of a queer vibration in his head but again heard no sound. For a moment he was too scared to move. He saw Stratton advancing toward him.

He essayed to stand up and found that he could not move his right arm, which was still tingling violently. Stratton stood in front of him, moving his lips rapidly.

"My God!" ejaculated Bob. "I'm deaf and dumb and paralyzed!"

He felt the vibration in his teeth. Stratton said something which, of course, Bob could not hear. He pointed to his lips and arms, dumbly convinced that because he could not hear he could not speak. Again Stratton spoke and, looking around in the grass, picked up Bob's revolver, the barrel of which was twisted. Bob became irritated because Stratton did not seem to be interested in his terrible plight but, holding the useless weapon, was talking rapidly as he pointed idiotically, Bob thought, to the departing storm. Bob shook his head violently and touched his arm. Stratton asked some question, stared at him curiously, spoke again and took hold of Bob's wrist.

"I'm dumb, you fool!" ejaculated Bob, quite unconscious that he was speaking.

Stratton went on talking quietly and irritatingly, pinching Bob's arm slowly up toward the shoulder. From the movements of Stratton's mouth Bob got the reiterated words:

"Can you feel that?—Here?—Here?"

He could feel the pinches numbly, yet so obsessed was he with the fear of dumbness that he wondered how he was supposed to reply. He turned slightly. Then, suddenly, the paralysis was broken by a shout of wrath at the sight of the Munyamwezi cook excitedly haranguing the headman and a group of porters some few yards away. On the same instant his hearing returned. He caught the words, "Kavalli—bad medicine—magic."

His excited action and his yell had alarmed the men. As he turned to run for his gun, the crowd splashed away timorously for some dozen yards.

"Your gun!" he shouted and Stratton, who had thrown his gun from him when the electric storm had struck them, hurriedly began to search for it in the long grass. Bob, whose anger was stimulated by the mental tension caused by the temporary lightning stroke, made for the cook. The crowd, probably convinced by his demeanor that the Munyamwezi's statement that the white men were bewitched was true, scattered instantly and fled. Swearing, Bob started to run down the cook.

In fifty yards his long legs had gained a few feet on the Munyamwezi. Suddenly Bob saw the cook flounder and slip, in an effort apparently to double back. He swerved to cut him off. The man slithered a few feet, threw his hands in the air and disappeared.

As Bob raced on he caught a glimpse of green water just in time to pull up on the bank of the river. A dozen yards away a woolly head bobbed up and, swimming monkey style in the native way, the fellow, frightened out of his senses, began to make his way out into the stream. Bob shouted at him to come back. The next moment he saw a swirl of water and heard a shrill scream. The man disappeared.

Sweating and swearing, Bob returned.

to find Stratton sitting on one of the deserted loads smoking a cigaret.

"The river's there," panted Bob disgustedly. "The fool tried to swim it and a croc got him."

"You're the —— fool," said his partner politely. "Why on earth did you suddenly go mad, may I inquire?"

"Mad! ——!" retorted Bob, sitting down and mopping his forehead. "That lop-eared guy of yours was scaring 'em stiff and——"

"You scared 'em, my dear fellow," remonstrated Stratton. "But I understood," he added dryly, "that you were paralyzed and deaf and dumb."

"Eh?" Bob stared for a moment and grinned. "By ——! I'd forgotten. But my arm still tingles."

"Why the devil didn't you throw your gun away? You ought to have known that metal attracts lightning. Good Lord, you might easily have been killed. As it is, you're jolly lucky to get away with a mild shock. Look what it did to your gun."

"Ugh—m," grunted Bob ruefully, caressing his arm. "The derned thing was in such a mighty hurry. Mighty fine fix we're in now," he added, lugubriously. "Holy smoke, I'm beginning to believe that that goddess of yours is some magician. If this is the beginning of the outfit what will the end be?"

IV

BOB'S fears of the magical powers of the goddess, however, were allayed. The fate of the luckless Munyamwezi appeared to have removed their streak of ill luck. Some ten hours' march brought them to the village. As excuse for their plight, they told the headman that the Wunyoro porters had bolted; this easily passed muster, as such an incident was not in the least unusual.

Without much difficulty they hired two canoes and sufficient paddlers and returned down-stream to pick up the loads where they had left them a few yards from the river-bank. On the whole the storm had served them well, for, although Bob's arm remained stiff and sore for some days, they had rid themselves of possible contamination from the Munyamwezi and had saved twenty precious cartridges.

That night they camped at the village, taking care to inquire ostentatiously about elephants on the upper reaches of the Semliki and to talk of another expedition with many supplies which was to follow them within a few days, in order to allay any suspicions that might be aroused by the meager amount of their equipment.

The next day's journey continued through the narrowing corridor of the plain of euphorbia and palms. The mountains grew higher above and the bamboo forests of the foot-hills were feathered against the sky-line. They passed only one other village on the river bank at which they did not stop, and immediately after breaking camp next morning the delicate mauve of the floor of the corridor grew rapidly into the violet of dense forest.

Exactly where they were going to leave the river and make for the mountains in search of the mysterious tribe, they had not decided, nor could they yet do so. Stratton had some of the best maps obtainable, distinguished by dotted lines, blank spaces and vague reports which were supplemented by notes and observations made on his southern trip.

The chief trouble was how to secure any men to accompany them. This time they naturally took special care not to refer to the real object of their trip. The canoemen had agreed to take the white men as far as the Semliki toward Lake Albert Edward as canoes could travel, but, as river people, they would not be likely to volunteer to act as porters. What manner of tribes lay between the last village and the lake, Stratton did not know, nor anybody else for that matter, except from hearsay.

Bob, musing on the adventure, began to fear that from the financial side the trip was doomed to failure, for, even if they discovered a whole valley full of dead elephants, they would be of no commercial value without means of transporting them to a market. As he had realized too painfully in those lone and dreary Balegga hills, however, there was in him a desire that dollars could never satisfy, a longing that had brought him from the States to wildest Africa, the keen edge of which had been whetted by the Englishman's story of the legend.

From the headman of the paddlers, who spoke fluent Luganda, they understood that two days' march distant was an agricultural tribe from whom they could easily obtain men to carry their goods. But from experience they both knew only too well that no reliance could be placed upon such statements, for the native has an amusing habit of coloring the answer to any question from the suggestion framed in the sentence, a manner arising from a polite desire to please the white man, which has lead more than one distinguished explorer to make ridiculous statements. They could only wait and see.

SHORTLY after midday the river began to fork into half a dozen gloomy channels through the fringe of the mighty Ituri forest. Opposite the first island, the canoes swerved, balked, swung around and simultaneously a wild clamor of discussion broke out among the paddlers. Unable to understand a word of the local dialect, Bob and Stratton had perforce to sit as patiently as possible. Every attempt to elicit an answer from the headman, he who spoke Luganda, as to what the row was about was ignored, as he was far too busy a performer.

When this affair had continued for about a quarter of an hour the canoes drifted with the current nearer to the island. Bob tried to straighten out matters by the curt command, "*didimalla*," but he might as well have addressed a group of monkeys.

"Let 'em alone," suggested Stratton, who was of a more patient temperament. "They're probably discussing esthetic values. And in— What the deuce!"

The exclamation was caused by a piercing, tremulous cry. As the clamor abruptly ceased, there came a curious flutter in the water and the tapping of wood against wood.

"Pigmies!" exclaimed Bob and pointed to a tiny slip of wood which had struck Stratton's helmet and fallen into the canoe. It was an arrow having the point fire-hardened and bearing, in lieu of feathers, small leaves. As each man began to paddle furiously, the headman yelled for the white men to fire into the bush upon the near shore.

"No, don't!" advised Stratton as Bob grabbed his rifle. "They don't know any better and besides we'll only incur their enmity if we kill a few."

"Darned little rats!" muttered Bob, staring at the dense bush as the canoe veered away. "They've killed two of my best ivory people already."

As he spoke, another ineffective flight of arrows flickered against the burnt sky and fluttered harmlessly in the water.

"But they've got these fellows scared stiff."

"I know that too well," assented Stratton, watching the shore. "Had the same trouble on the Albert Edward side. My men wouldn't face 'em in bush. Have you ever met 'em?"

"Some of 'em, but not the real thing," responded Bob. "Some of 'em are half tamed. Come in with skins and sometimes ivory but they won't be seen. Leave the things beneath a tree and then the tame fellows come along and change 'em for sweet potatoes and knives. Did you ever meet the real wild fellow?"

"Saw 'em. Tried to get me, of course. Tried hard to make friends with them. As a matter of fact, I had an idea of taking a specimen or two home with me, you know."

"But nothing doing, eh? I know. Wilder than monkeys, so they say."

"Rather. Just a shade above the orang-utan of Borneo, although one can tame them on occasion. I say, where the deuce are we going now?" Stratton added, noticing that the men were heading down-stream. "Hey you!" to the headman.

"Oh, my Lord!" exclaimed Bob. "Now we're in for trouble. These fellows are going to refuse to go on. That's the game for a hundred dollars. *Ee-eh!*" he added in Luganda "*Munyampala tunagabo wa?* (Where are you steering to?) *Wunjula eryato!* (Turn the canoe around!) *Mangu Mangu!* (Quickly!)"

"A-aaa! Neda! Neda wangula! (No! No, master!)" shouted the man excitedly. "These are savages. They will eat us and flay our skins"—a reference to the reputed practice of some pigmies of tanning the skins of their enemies slain in battle.

They proved obdurate to whatever threats or bribes the white men made,

apparently preferring death in any form to losing their skins, as then, obviously, their several ghosts would be frozen and scorched alternately for evermore. At last, after considerable recrimination from both parties, by which time they had reached a comparatively safe distance from the pigmies, the headman informed the white men that nothing on earth save the services of an authenticated witch-doctor of unusual merit and power could persuade the men to brave the terrors of the passage through the islands.

According to them, the journey was longer than a day's fast paddling and therefore necessitated a night in the dense jungle, where the little wild men would, without doubt, surround them in the trees and kill every man with their tiny poisoned arrows. These arrows are inefficient-looking slips of wood, like the darts of the Dyak sumpitan, yet merely a puncture of the skin entails almost instantaneous death.

The headman added that they had not contracted as soldiers but merely as paddlers and were therefore entitled to refuse certain death in this world and considerable inconvenience in the next. He added that, for himself, he was a warrior of renowned merit and invincible courage, unacquainted with fear of ghosts or wild men, but unfortunately he had recollected that within a few days he had an appointment with his family to celebrate the marriage of his sister. To attend this fête, indeed, he had refused a most lucrative offer in Irumu—a Belgian fort in the Congo—in order to hasten back to Unyoro, otherwise he would be delighted to accompany his admirable friends and masters to the end of the earth.

In consideration of the circumstances would the said honorable friends and masters be so kind as to forego the honor of his company and, incidentally, pay him for the services of his men and canoes?

"Most annoying," commented Stratton when Bob had translated this eloquent harangue. "Really, it seems as if our confounded goddess——"

"——'em," snorted Bob. "Goddess or no goddess I'm going through with this if only to ask the lady how she does it. I'd like to *kiboko* every mother's son of 'em but——"

"That won't do any good whatever," Stratton began to protest.

"I know that mighty well!" assented Bob snappily. "We'd better camp for the night and argue the point."

"Yes, I think so. You might play on our valiant friend's vanity as a warrior and—er—by the promise of judicious bakshish possibly he may be persuaded to forego the pleasures of the wedding feast. What?"

"Yes, that's a good line," assented Bob, grinning. "Say, you! *Goba mu mwalo azwo!* (Steer for the nearest landing place!)" he commanded the headman.

DOUBTLESS thinking that the whites were prepared to accede to his demands, the headman turned the canoes down-stream and at the first possible opening in the scrub and forest ran in for a landing. Pretending that matters were in no way disturbed, Bob commanded them to make camp for the night. They balked, protesting that they were still too near to the pigmies' region, but eventually obeyed. During the rest of the day the whites took their siesta and smoked, ostentatiously ignoring any reference to the serious difference of opinion.

Meanwhile the two discussed the best method of tickling the cupidity of the headman so that the fear of the pigmies—genuine enough among all the surrounding tribes—would be overcome and he might be persuaded to continue the journey. The situation was even graver than before, for, as they had foreseen, the agricultural tribe from whom porters could be so easily obtained was still two days' march ahead.

From the look of the country, they had no hope of finding any tribe whatsoever within communicable distance. Even if, as they suspected, they would eventually have to tackle the mountains alone, they had every need to have their goods transported as far as possible. They decided to make an attempt to bribe or cajole the headman into continuing the journey by water.

"If the worst comes to the worst," said Stratton, "one canoe is enough to take back the blighters and, by the Lord, we'll keep the other!"

After their own dinner of the fresh

liver and kidneys of a water-buck shot on the previous afternoon, and after the paddlers were well gorged on the flesh, they summoned the headman to a *shauri*. At first the man insisted that he must return for the wedding. Bob countered by pointing out that, as was evident by the head-dress—the helmet—his friend Stratton was a renowned hunter and wizard and had powerful magic that rendered him and any one whom he chose to protect, immune to pigmies, fever, demons of the night, animals—in short, anything that walked, crawled or flew in the visible or invisible worlds. This information was received most politely, but the man hastened to observe that, while he personally understood such profound matters, one could not expect common paddlers to comprehend.

Bob delicately suggested that such a worthy hunter as the headman was deserving of a real white man's rifle. This idea evidently coincided with the headman's own secret estimation of his prowess, but, native-like, some half-hour's talking was necessary before the urgent desire to return home and the terror of the pigmies' darts began to disappear.

At length, however, they arrived at a point where the only difficulty remaining was the fact that the other paddlers, who belonged to another tribe and were therefore ignorant, could not be persuaded or expected to have the courage of their chief unless they each received the equivalent of a rifle. From the lack of the necessary goods, agreement was impossible; the price, too, was obviously excessive.

Bob declined to entertain the suggestion and pointed out that if the man wished to become the proud owner of the rifle, a possession coveted by any native of no matter what high degree, he had better arrange matters swiftly, adding, as if by an afterthought, that one canoe might be made to contain their impedimenta with possibly the chief and two paddlers. Of course the headman immediately urged at some length that he could not leave his people to return through the country of the pigmy. Bob retorted that he had spoken and curtly dismissed him.

Thus, apparently, an impasse re-

mained. Throughout the most of the sticky night, however, while the white men were sweating in the confined space of their camp-nets, the men, squatting around the fire in the moonlight in the lee of a greenwood smudge, carried on a violent debate.

At the first faint pink above the towering Gamballagalla peaks, Bob and Stratton were awakened by vigorous chatter which they decided to ignore completely. Bob made coffee and afterward commanded the men to load the goods in one canoe, as if all arrangements had been settled. A loud clamor of protest arose, above which the headman finally made himself understood to the effect that the men would not consent to return nor to continue unless they were paid double the price agreed for their services. Ignoring them, Bob unfastened a bale of *bafta*—trade cloth—and began to measure out each man's whack. Above a renewed pandemonium the headman informed him that they would all come with the white men, whom they had suddenly discovered to be great magicians, on the condition that each one should receive a Snider rifle. Bob retorted that if anybody could conjure Snider rifles out of their goods he would present one to each man as merely a preliminary present.

So the argument continued until the sun was peering almost above their heads, over the cloud-capped peaks. Finally it was agreed that they should receive the coveted Snider on return to Unyoro. Yet, when the order to load and march was again given, a fresh clamor arose. The paddlers protested that it was too late in the day to start, as the pigmies or demons of the night, or both allied presumably, would overtake and devour them before they were out of the jungle. From experience Bob knew that a lost temper would probably lose what they had gained, so, philosophically, he assented and, to retain their good humor by keeping their bellies full, announced that they would go out shooting.

V

NEXT morning, in spite of a certain nervousness among the paddlers, revealed by the continuous display of the

whites of their eyes, the island from which the pigmies had saluted them was passed without mishap. Throughout the day they paddled without cessation. Sometimes the channel narrowed until they crawled against the sluggish stream in the cool shadows of the great forest almost interlaced above their heads. It was an aerial domain, walled with avid green creepers stretching vampirish claws, with strange plants and occasional orchids. A frenzied life of screaming parrots and excessively annoyed monkeys was, at times, startlingly revealed.

Once, at an excited whisper from the headman as they glided beneath an awning of close-woven sepia and cerulean blue, they glimpsed a queer, primitive structure, suggesting a simian abode, amidst the boughs of a giant tree. This, as Stratton confirmed, was an abandoned pigmy village.

As the metallic sun, caught by the haze above the retreating Congo hills, tinted the Gamballagalla's haloed peaks with gold and the slopes with purple and green, they came into open country where, according to the headman, was a site suitable for making camp without fear of interference from the dreaded pigmies, who could never be lured, on any pretext, from their jungle lairs.

The following afternoon they entered once more into the forest country, through which the paddlers insisted upon hurrying. Finally the fear of the demons inhabiting the gloomy channel overcame their terror of the pigmies and they consented to camp. They built large fires much as if, as Bob suggested, they were intent on advertising their presence to the whole forest; but he did not perhaps appreciate the beneficial effect of fire against the spirits of the night, as he was after all a white man, and white men, as everybody knows, are in league with the devils, a fact easily proved by their daily magic in the lighting of splinters and the miraculous power of their iron tubes. The white men, however, as they squatted in their blankets, talked through their mosquito nets of far more important things, from their point of view, than mere sprites and goblins.

From the proximity and the general contour of the mountains, Stratton de-

cided that they were in the vicinity of the point at which they must begin their land journey. He had gathered from the Arab who had related the legend, that the location of the mysterious tribe was somewhere at the southern end of the mountain chain.

After about two hours' journey on the third day, they came, by chance, to a spur of the foot-hills around which the river wound against cliffs fifty feet high, devoid of heavy jungle.

"*Munyampala, toozwoomoolcko* (Let us stop here a bit)," suggested Bob to the headman quietly, in order not to scare him.

Satisfied after a swift glance around that there was little cover for attack, the headman consented. They drew into the bank, which was fairly steep, and sought and found a comfortable landing-place. Leaving the chattering paddlers, Bob and Stratton mounted the first incline to reconnoiter. From the summit crowned with elephant grass, the prospect appeared most inviting. The spur continued along in the shape of a hog's back for a mile or so, where it appeared to rise slightly to a higher plane and to run on upward into the main foot-hills, which seemed fairly clear of thick brush. To the southeast was a violet valley, deep as a vast ravine and penetrating seemingly into the mountains. Due south and southwest was the heaving sea of the Ituri forest, which, like a gigantic green blanket thrown over the near Congo hills which they could see, nearly joined the Gamballagalla on the horizon, obliterated the river and surged up the mighty slopes, apparently above the bamboo level.

"Looks good to me," commented Bob after a steady survey of the violet valley through Stratton's prism glasses. "What do you think?"

"Precisely," agreed Stratton. "This last fellow here—" pointing to a conical mountain rising massively into the filmy clouds—"seems to be the most southern. To the south, here, is evidently where the forest or mountain god swallows the river. Probably our late friend with the gold bangle came through this very valley. Naturally one seeks the line of least resistance. I propose that we strike through here and follow that valley."

What? By the way, how many days did our men say it was to the nearest tribe?"

"Used to be two days' march," said Bob, laughing. "Now it's four. Probably lying."

"M-m, don't think so this time. Probably more. Passing Albert Edward they told me that the north was uninhabited save by the pigmies and game. Wonderful game country around the north of Kivu. So wild you can walk right up to 'em. Fact; but look here, how the deuce are we going to persuade these chaps to tote our *impashle*?"

"Bribery and corruption, as usual, I suppose—if they'll come at all. Guess the best game is to tell them we want to go shooting and kid them along as far as we can. Anyway, let's go down and put them through the third degree."

ACCORDINGLY they returned and had lunch, remarking that there was no sign of game in the vicinity. When the men were about to prepare the canoes to resume the voyage, Bob told the headman that they were to go hunting again. Ever greedy for meat, the men consented. In the afternoon, praying that no game would be seen, they went out, taking Mfanyana, the headman, and two others with them. Luck served. In a neighboring valley spoor were seen but not a sign of buck. Both white men returned exhibiting every sign of angry disappointment. They were tired: they would camp for the night, they declared. Mfanyana did not like the idea, apparently, nor did his men when he ordered them to unload the canoes, but they obeyed.

Next morning, as if a brilliant idea had occurred during the night, Bob announced that they were so enchanted with the beauty of the distant valley—from a sporting point of view—that they had decided to explore it. A couple of the men should remain with the canoes and the rest would carry the valises and food for a few days' good hunting.

Immediately upon receiving this information, the face of Mfanyana took on an expression of complete vacuity. Woodenly he replied to an abrupt repetition of the order that the men would not stay another night on this spot.

More than an hour of interrogation was required before a reluctant admission was dragged from him that the place was enchanted. Knowing too much of the processes of the native mind, Bob did not attempt to contradict. Instead, he tried to argue on the plane of native logic, protesting that the united magic of the two white men was more than sufficient to overcome any local witchcraft. The face of Mfanyana became, if possible, more wooden than before. The man's whole attitude convinced Bob of the utter futility of any effort at persuasion. He sought only to find what motive was behind the inhibition.

For more than an hour, with long pauses between sentences, he fought to overcome the man's resistance to divulging the secret. At last, but only to a limited extent, he succeeded. Possibly excited by the apparent corroboration of what he desired to be true, Bob determined to learn whether the man really did know of the legend. Pointing to the distant mountains, he boasted that he was the greatest of magicians, that he feared neither demon nor man. Then, leaning forward dramatically, he declaimed, almost in the native manner, that he had come from the deep waters—the country of the white man—to seek a holy white magician and chieftainess—goddess.

The mask-like face of the native, as if graven in unpolished oak, seemed to split. The pupils of his eyes nearly disappeared as the purple-black lips opened in a wail of terror. The next instant the man squirmed to his feet and fled, crying aloud some incomprehensible words.

The group of paddlers around the fire arose. The crowd, with Mfanyana in the lead, dashed straight to the river, falling over each other in their frantic eagerness to scramble into a canoe. Uttering low wailing sounds, as if all the devils and pigmies of the Ituri forest were after them, they paddled furiously from the bank and down-stream.

"What the deuce have you done now?" inquired Stratton, regarding Bob, who was staring after the retreating canoes as if he were mesmerized. Before replying Bob turned his head to regard his partner.

"The legend is true," he replied quietly.

"Precisely!" agreed Stratton. "The most amusing things always are. Haven't you ever noticed that? But how did you find out?"

Bob related what he had told the headman.

"M-m," commented his partner and rattled his pipe-stem between his teeth. "I say, old man, d'you golf? Well, permit me to tell you we'll have to play this game without any caddies—a — of a course in Africa, you bally ass!"

VI

AN ultramarine infinity of falling water, so solid that the air seemed excluded, which appeared to sizzle as it met the earth, quivered into purple flashes simultaneously with its violent concussions. A sudden pallid light grew swiftly into yellow glare, rushing furiously after the last blue curtain of the storm, setting free laughing lights upon a myriad rillets and thrice as many stems and shimmering leaves. From the long grass upon a steep hillside rose two heads. The hair was plastered upon the foreheads of the white men and their nude bodies gleamed with delicate violet and faint green tints.

"Good Lord!" gasped the smaller, slender man. "I really thought that I was frizzling in hell."

"Good imitation," agreed Bob, squeezing water out of his hair. "Phew! I hope it scared those runaways stiff."

After rummaging in a bundle of clothes and goods lying beside him in the grass, Stratton produced a dry helmet, a packet of cigarets and matches and, squatting on the load, adjusted the first and proceeded to smoke and dry in the sun. Bob followed suit with a pipe.

From the crest of the hill was spread before them the violet valley which rolled away in a vivid green lake to the farther shores, a mountainside curving up into a plateau covered with bamboo, from whence, in the clear light after the storm, they could see precipitous cliffs rising in jagged masses, planes and spires of mauve, pink, lemon-yellow, until they were lost in the cirrus just beneath the snow-line.

"This is going to be the very devil to cross," commented Stratton contemplat-

ing the valley. "But sooner or later we shall have to do it, for apparently this spur is a foot-hill isolated from the main range. What?"

"Perhaps so," agreed Bob. "But still we can't very well see from this angle. Maybe a saddle or something connects the two. With this rainfall that valley must be nearly a lake. We'd better get to it as soon as possible, I guess. Best steer by that point jutting out over there, a bit up the valley, eh? Got the bearings?"

"West-southwest a half west exactly," said Stratton consulting his pocket compass. "But we'll see nothing at all in that infernal stuff below; still we ought to work out somewhere near the point. Phew! This sun's like a bally furnace. Come on!"

They dressed quickly and, taking a rifle and two bandoliers apiece, together with a kind of rucksack composed of a blanket, a water-proof sheet, a mosquito curtain and as much *biltong*—dried meat—chocolates and tea as they could well carry, they set off along the edge of the crest. Two hours' steady scrambling across washouts still dribbling water from the storm brought them to the dense vegetation and swamp at the lip of the forest. They rested for a few minutes, gazing at the shadowed mass of violet slashed with swirls and patches of emerald. They looked at each other significantly, then shouldered their packs and advanced.

For the first fifty yards they sank deeper and deeper into morass. Stratton was submerged to his chest in squelching mire, which gave at every disturbing movement a disgusting smell like sulfureted hydrogen. Bob's hips were barely covered. Reeking with sweat and covered with green stinking slime, they halted. Above the rank swamp-grass was visible to Bob the violet cavern of the forest. He looked back at his partner.

"Can't swim in this stuff," said he.

"Precisely," agreed Stratton curtly.

"I'll scout ahead and see if I can find firm ground or something. Will you wait?"

"Dee-lighted, I'm sure," spluttered Stratton. "Er—if I disappear I'll leave my helmet to mark the spot."

"Oh, don't bother, old top," retorted Bob. "I'll send along a pigmy with a wreath of orchids."

He plunged on, his shoulders and head barely visible in the cloud of disturbed mosquitoes. Meanwhile, grimly patient under the unaccustomed burden of which he could not relieve himself, Stratton waited. As he pawed continually at his face and neck, he felt that gradually he was sinking in the swamp. At length Bob reappeared, haloed in pests but without his load.

"I've left the gear in a tree," said he. "Seems pretty fierce but I think we can make it. Unstrap your load and I'll tote it along."

"Very nice of you," began Stratton, beginning to heave forward, "but——"

Stratton, who was always apt to be sensitive to any reference to his stature, obeyed; indeed he was conscious that in this instance he was very much at a disadvantage. Squirming along in Bob's wake, he reached the trees to find not firm ground but a tangle of undergrowth so dense that they could slither and climb over it. Although the sun was scorching, the heat in the shade of the twittering, creaking, weeping forest was worse. The gasses of rotting vegetation permeated the air, seeming to fill the lungs with the green slime of the swamp, tasting like rotten eggs.

Slipping to their hips or chests through the sinuous floor of undergrowth, pulling each other or themselves out by grabbing hold of tendrils covered with reeking fungi, dragging their loads after them, they toiled and sweated for hours in the green gloom of this vast chamber of teeming life and stinking death, beneath a roof of pallid cerulean, veined in a fantastic, sepia design of agonized limbs, writhing fronds and leaves.

Frequently they verified the course by Stratton's pocket compass. Once only they rested for half an hour, ate some chocolate and drank very little tepid liquid from their water-bottles, for they could not know how long it would be before they could replenish them.

Toward four in the afternoon, no sign of mountain or hill could they see. They began to grow anxious. They had calculated that they should have made the passage across the arm of forest before

sunset, but the platinum glare through the fretwork of the roof dimmed remorselessly and through the thick air came swiftly the gloom of night, long before the sun had set in the outside world.

They sought the largest tree available, and, as they sat or lolled with their backs against the fungoid bole the lacrimose twittering of the forest was torn by a sudden screaming of parrots above their heads, followed almost instantly by a terrified screech close at hand.

"What the Sam Hill's that?" demanded Bob, tightening his grip on the rifle.

"Oh," responded Stratton wearily, "the night life is beginning, no doubt."

"Night life," muttered Bob disgustingly. "Sounds like Broadway."

NIGHT passed; a night of tense listening in the attempt to distinguish the approach of any hostile animal or snake in the greasy, muttering darkness. Tired as they were, sleep was impossible. Warm, wet moths and flying beetles flapped perpetually without the mosquito-nets wrapped around their helmets, or crawled beneath and fluttered disgustingly upon face and neck. The fork of the trunk on which they were perched was so slimy with fungus that a moment's slacking of the tension of their clutch produced an ominous slipping.

Yet, out of the warm, muttering stench of the forest punctuated by mysterious screams, yawns and distant howls, no beast or snake disturbed them. The night passed. As the moon rose, the cavern above their head began to be traced in mosaics of absinthe light. They sighed with relief, lighted two of the last box of cigarets and munched chocolate.

On the equator the sun rises all the year round at six o'clock, but not before eight-thirty was there enough light to begin the march. An hour brought them to a swiftly flowing river, the water of which evidently came from snow, for it was quite cool and sweet. The main stream was not very wide in parts, and in places the great boughs of the larger trees nearly met.

An hour they spent making the crossing, refreshed by a glimpse of a moun-

tainside rising into clouds. Scarcely had they commenced the struggle anew when they were again held up by one of the same type of lightning and rain storms as on the previous day. In this region, below a certain altitude, such storms are almost a daily occurrence throughout the year.

Before the storm struck them, they were warned by a sudden uncanny cessation of the muttering, creaking life. Then, as if some one had blown out the sun as one does a candle, opaque darkness enveloped them. The concussions were not so violent, for the dense trees acted as a cushion. The flashes were illuminations of the patterned roof in sepia and platinum. The rain was broken by the trees and seemed not to fall but to run in a myriad rillets down every branch and trunk into the undergrowth.

Once more they plunged on and, to their joy, within three or four hours their eyes were nearly blinded by the glare of sun in the open. The swamp-edge this time was not so deep, and, by following the cliff-base for some distance, they found a slight gap which permitted them to drag their weary limbs up on to the hard, grassy ground.

They drank a little of the sweet water from the snow and rested a while. As they could not find or recognize the jutting rock which they had selected as their goal, and were too exhausted to consider plans, they clambered blindly up and up, following the easiest conformation of the mountainside. When the sun was beginning to cast the long violet shadows of the Congo hills across the great rift of the Semliki, they felt their tired feet upon the short, thick grass of the steep boulder-strewn hill and, stumbling to the crest, they sat down.

"My word!" cried Stratton suddenly. "Bracken!"

Before them, the near end still lighted by the rays of the sinking sun, was a large ravine running up between the thighs of the mountain and covered with wild ferns looking indeed just like bracken. Stratton's joy, however, was quickly suppressed by the intense desire to sleep. At Bob's suggestion they rose wearily and plodded on for a quarter of an hour. As the short twilight leaped

upon them, they found a great, lone boulder. Here they threw down their rifles and packs and flopped into the soft bracken. In two minutes they were asleep.

Fortunately for them, at this altitude there were no mosquitoes or other pests such as infest the tropical plains and swamps. Sometimes during the night or morning Stratton awoke. Wondering where he was, he sat up, conscious that he was stiff with cold. Opposite him, the contour of a mountain rose in dense sepia turning, toward the peak, into a faint luminous shimmer against the glittering stars. From the bracken around him rose a sweet, familiar odor like the moors in spring. The silence was unbroken. His limbs were numbed. Breaking the fascination of the still night, he shook Bob, who lay beside him. Bob merely grunted but, after repeated punches and pulls, awoke.

"What's the matter?" he demanded sleepily.

"Get out your blanket, you bally ass!" snapped Stratton. "It's nearly freezing."

Still half-asleep, Bob, swearing and grumbling, obeyed. The next time they were awakened it was by the light in their eyes. It was broad daylight, yet there was no sunshine for the pinnacles of the mountain were shrouded in clouds. They rubbed their stiffened limbs and sat up. Bob stared at Stratton and laughed.

"You sure look like a half-drowned parrot!" said he.

Both men were streaked with green slime and fungi from head to foot, and Stratton's helmet looked like a half-decomposed apple pudding.

"Really?" inquired Stratton languidly. "May I suggest that you are probably in the last stages of gangrene. Could you prove yourself to be a man, I should, as a justice of the peace, certainly give you two years without the option."

Bob looked at his watch. It was nine o'clock, but by the glare they could see that the sun had only just surmounted the mountain-tops. They lighted a fire with dead bracken and enjoyed real tea and *biltong*. Rejuvenated, they reconnoitred in the vicinity and finally decided to continue directly up the bracken-covered ravine.

All day they marched steadily, grateful

for the lack of the sun and a faint crispness which lingered in the air and increased slightly as they rose in altitude. The weather was like that of a fine Spring day in Europe. They found that the ravine wound to the southwest and led into another, rising steadily all the while. The mountains towered on either side and were lost in clouds. Neither man nor beast did they see and no birds, save once they glimpsed something high up which resembled an eagle. That night they slept in comfort, free from pests of any sort.

ON the third day, at the saddle of the second great ravine, came the spur of a mountain, on either side of which was a narrow, boulder-tumbled pass. They halted to consider their choice. Mounting a slope to get a better view, they saw, in the one which ran nearly due southwest, the gleam of water. They decided to follow that.

This small rift was bare and strewn with lava-like boulders and veined rock into which the sun, or the glare through the clouds, scarcely penetrated for more than an hour at midday. So it was that, when late in the afternoon they reached the water, they were not surprised to find it to be the cup of an old crater.

They sat on the edge for a while to rest. The prospect beyond was forbidding. The cleft developed into a gully which rose abruptly and appeared to narrow into a bottle-neck whose bare sides were gray and black. The somber colors of the mountain, slashed in one place by a small waterfall, loomed into mist. In the water of the crater lake, they bathed and found it was chilly, stagnant and distinctly brackish. However, for drinking water, they need have no fear for evidently the mountain streams from the snows ran continually, but food was another matter. They had not much *biltong* left and only enough chocolate to last for four days. They had no means of reckoning how long it would be before their rifles could replenish the larder.

They plodded on up the rough gully, through the bottle-neck and into a broken cañon. The going became more and more difficult. Great boulders were tumbled in heaps, as if a giant had been

trying to block the passage; there were sudden openings into small arenas full of pot-holes and what were apparently extinct geysers. In the narrowest parts of the cañon, the walls were fifty feet high and the passage sometimes just wide enough for one man.

They began to think that they would soon come to an impasse and seriously considered turning back. The gloom was deepening, however, and they could not get as far as the crater lake before dark. So they pushed on hoping, at least, to reach a wider space. By three o'clock the dull strip of cloud above their heads gave scarcely enough light to enable them to avoid holes and rocks. In another hour they were forced to camp.

Now, instead of stewing in the forest, they froze in the mountains. With merely a water-proof sheet and one blanket, sleep was out of the question. Although they hunted around until the last pallid light had been devoured by the gloom, they could not find a single stick with which to make a fire. Wedged in this rocky cañon as if at the bottom of a tomb, they huddled together for warmth, dozed and talked the night through.

When at last their eager eyes caught the first streak of pale light above, they rose, with limbs utterly numbed by the cold, and began to pace up and down to restore their circulation. Owing to his continuous residence in the tropical country, Bob's blood was thinner, so that he suffered the more. After solemn discussion they opened one of the two precious bottles of cognac brought for medical purposes and each had a good swig. Then once more they started away.

A mile farther, the cañon suddenly opened into an arena like the opening of a railway cut. Almost in the center of the rubble rose the jagged lips of another crater containing, as the previous one, more or less stagnant water. Even in the comparative open, as on the previous day, the sun was obscured by clouds. Again they squatted on the edge of the crater to take stock of the surroundings and perceived slowly that it was actually a small crater at the bottom of a gigantic one.

Over the circular rim they could discern a mountain-slope to the east, but the other mountains had apparently re-

treated during their passage through the cañon, to a distance of a mile or more. Their first idea was to escape from the great crater, which appeared to them like the bottom of a colossal mouse-trap, but a swift examination of the walls through the prism glasses showed that the angle of the slope was about ninety degrees and failed to reveal any break or crack in the water-worn sides large enough to insert a finger.

"Seems to me," commented Bob after a long survey, "that we're a couple of fool steers in a pen. Can't see a gate anywhere."

"Probably," said Stratton, "and yet again merely possibly."

"Well, let's go and look, if you're so darned optimistic."

They rose and slowly made the complete circle of the large crater without discovering a fissure sufficient to be of use even to a monkey of abnormal agility.

"Huh!" snorted Bob disgustedly. "If we get out the way we came, we'll be lucky. We—what the devil are you up to? Going to cut your throat?" he demanded as Stratton produced a hunting knife.

"This is lava, and not very old at that," said Stratton as he began to peck at the side with his knife.

"Well, what about it?"

"Have you ever been mountain climbing before? Ah, I thought not. Well, you see we do this sort of thing over glaciers—not with a knife of course, but it will serve."

Bob watched him perplexedly for several moments.

"Ah, I get you! Carve a stairs up the blessed mountain?"

"Precisely!" assented Stratton.

That was the way they escaped. Long and arduous was the digging of each step, for the lava was not as amenable to a knife as is ice. The crater from which they had emerged seemed a vast lake of ink as they reached the outer lip.

As the twilight pounced upon the mountain valley, they had just time to observe that they were in another gully and to gather sufficient scrub, which looked like sage-brush, to make a fire. They ate a fair meal of one bar of chocolate and the remains of the *biltong*, together with some tea and a wee swig—

an open bottle ever has a temptation—of cognac. It sent them most comfortably to sleep, tired and glowing in the chilly night air.

Whether Stratton or Bob was the first to awake, neither knew, but they both saw the same apparition—a circle of dark-bronze men clad in garments of a reddish hue as graceful as an Arab's robes. Each one was armed with a long-bladed spear. In the midst of them stood a taller man with a much fairer complexion and with features almost as delicate as a Greek's. He looked like one of the Bahima—a cattle-raising tribe to the east of the Ruwenzori Mountains in Uganda—or one of the Somali. Upon his wrist dully glimmered a bracelet of gold.

VII

AT the moment at which these figures reached the consciousness of both men the group was as silent as the mountains and clouds above them. White stared at bronze: bronze stared back. Stratton was the first to speak.

"Well, I'm —!" he drawled.

Instantly, as if the words were an incantation, the circle of natives broke into a torrent of vowel sounds which sounded like running water. The torrent stopped suddenly, as if soaked up by the ground, leaving only the trickling speech of the young man.

"*Kusema kiswahili?* (Do you speak Kiswahili?)" began Stratton as Bob shouted amost simultaneously in Luganda:

"*Ya Mwami, Otyano mugango.* (O chief, my friend, I greet you.)"

The tall young man addressed looked politely at the object sitting up with a blanket around his shoulders and spoke slowly. Bob thrust his head forward and demanded—

"*Kiki, ya Mwami?*"

Politely the young chief repeated the words.

"What language are they talking?" demanded Stratton.

"Kind of Luganda—shut up!" returned Bob curtly. "*Omukwano!* (Friend!)" he added.

The bronzed young man uttered another sentence more slowly so that the

stranger might the better understand. A puzzled expression passed across Bob's face as he was compelled to repeat again—

"*Kiki, Omwami?* (What, O chief?)"

Very patiently and still more slowly the chief repeated the words. Bob listened intently.

"Can't you understand?" demanded Stratton. Bob ignored him. The chief smiled in a friendly manner as he spoke again. While the two talked, Stratton observed the circle of warriors, who were attentively regarding the strangers. At length Bob turned to his partner.

"They talk a kind of Luganda," he said. "I don't know whether they are the tribe or not. We can't have walked straight through the Gamballagalla!"

"They seem a very charming people anyhow," remarked Stratton, who was sitting like a Buddha and smiling at the chief. "What did he say?"

"He wants to know where we have come from and what we want. I said that we are looking for ivory and wish to meet the chief of the country. I believe they must be the people of the goddess," he added. "Look at that bangle!"

"Don't say anything about the goddess," urged Stratton swiftly. "Probably she's under tabu, as with the other tribes."

"No, no, of course not, but I do believe they are. Maybe they're an offshoot of the original Baganda."

"Well, talk to the man," said Stratton.

The group had remained motionless, watching the expression on the faces of the white strangers as they talked. To Bob's carefully pronounced demand for permission to enter the country the young chief responded politely and slowly.

"Come on, get up!" said Bob to his partner. "He says that all strangers are welcome in the land of the Banana and wants to take us to get some grub."

"Perfectly charming fellow!" exclaimed Stratton.

As the two white men rose, the followers stood back deferentially. After the loads were packed in response to a muttered command, several of the natives rather gingerly picked them up and the young man, turning, pointed with his spear to the south cliff. Then, with a little inclination of his handsome head,

he swung in the lead with effortless grace.

As they set out to follow him and the excitement of the meeting had abated, the whites had an opportunity to look around. They appeared to have emerged from the great crater into a vast rift which ran east and west, both walls of which towered high above them. Across the floor of sparse grass and scrub, growing on burnt-looking soil, were two more craters looking like giant tumuli. There was apparently no outlet nor sign of any beaten trail.

Bob, who had first jumped to the conclusion that their camp-fire had attracted attention, was now at a loss to know how the natives discovered them. They were led toward a towering cliff which was blue in the diffused sunlight, and there came suddenly upon another freak rift in the basalt. A quarter of an hour's march through this cañon brought them abruptly upon a view that produced a gasp of surprise.

THE ground, covered with rich grass and scored with numerous ravines, sloped down with a gentle incline into a great valley, a park-like country of scattered trees and *vleis* which appeared to stretch some twenty or thirty miles across to other mountains whose summits were lost in mist. To the south, the dark mauve of a great forest rolled like a tidal wave half-way up the valley, which was bathed in sunlight. At various distances were bright points of water, evidently crater lakes, and here and there in the middle distance rose wisps of smoke from clumps of trees.

Immediately on their left was a group of small conical huts surrounded by a palisade and having a large cattle enclosure. To this village, amid the yapping of the usual prick-eared native dogs, the chief led them. Then, turning to Bob, he gestured elegantly as he invited them to be seated and stated that his people would bring food. As both men squatted down beside the nearest hut, the young chief smiled as if pleased and sank down upon his haunches beside them.

"The country of the white goddess, without a doubt," murmured Stratton as he surveyed the scene through his

glasses. "Must be a mountain-locked valley," he added to Bob, "unless the forest is an arm of the Ituri coming through somewhere to the south between Lake Albert Edward and the Semliki cañon."

"Mebbe," assented Bob, "but look at the place we've come from. The crater where we were seems to be in a desolate gap caused at some time by an enormous landslide. It looks as if the side of the mountain had been sliced in two."

"Possibly," assented Stratton, "but what's most interesting is that these mountains are not very old, as mountains go, you know."

Three slender young girls, clad in garments of reddish hue worn around their breasts and tucked under the armpits, approached, bearing on their heads calabashes of milk, eggs and boiled bananas. They knelt before the strangers, placed the calabashes at their feet and, inclining their heads very timidly, murmured a greeting.

"Perfectly charming people," remarked Stratton. "Did you notice that their dresses are made of exactly the same bark-cloth (fibrous cloth made by beating out the bark of a certain tree) as the Waganda wear?"

"And I told you," added Bob, "that their lingo is a kind of Luganda—same as trying to understand a man speaking Chaucer's English. The bananas too—the same way of cooking and serving. Holy smoke, that milk's good!"

While they were eating and drinking, Bob noticed the chief squatting near them and eying their rifles leaning against the hut thatch.

"I don't believe these beggars have ever seen a rifle," said Bob.

Apparently the young man had been too polite to indulge his curiosity, for, when Bob mentioned the subject and he had got the sense, his eyes brightened and he replied. Bob posed other questions, but the eyes clouded and no response was forthcoming. Bob smiled reassuringly and translated to his partner:

"He says that he has seen magic sticks like these, but apparently it has something to do with tabu, for he won't say where. I'll ask him whether he has ever seen them kill things."

Bob put the question and repeated the

words slowly, but the young man, whose features had become suddenly set, inquired politely whether the strangers would like to have some more milk. Perceiving that there were about four quarts in the calabash and that he was evidently treading on dangerous ground Bob judiciously changed the subject. When, after the meal, wondering what was next on the programme, Stratton took out his cigaret case, he watched the natives as he struck a light. He was disappointed, for not a muscle quivered on any one of the faces about him.

"Seem to have seen matches before," commented Bob.

"Not necessarily," said Stratton. "I've seen savages who had never before seen a white man, yet not one of them turned a hair when I lit a match. These may possibly believe us to be some sort of gods, you know, or at least great magicians; therefore, according to their point of view, nothing that we do is to be wondered at. What is he saying?"

After listening attentively, Bob replied

"He wishes to know whether we are rested enough to continue the journey."

"Where to?"

"Don't know. The chief's, I suppose. I don't think it well to ask."

K EENLY observed by a dozen or more shy brown eyes in the shade of a near-by hut, they rose and followed the chief along a cattle-trail running parallel with the crest of the hill. Down upon undulating ground of fairly open grass-land browsed a herd of several hundred cattle tended by brown children. After marching for about an hour, always keeping to the upper side of the slope not far from the mountain precipice, they passed at some distance a big village, upon a slight mound, which was entirely surrounded by a large plantation of bananas. Presently, leaving the comparatively short grass, they came upon a "made" road of several meters in width, cut through the tall elephant grass.

"— it, these people must be the original Baganda!" exclaimed Stratton. "They are the only tribe in Africa which has ever been known to make roads without a white man's influence. Why it's

Uganda over again, except that the road doesn't run up and down confounded hills and across papyrus swamps like a bally switchback. Bark-cloth and the mode of wearing it and the same language! Most interesting! I wonder what their theological system is?"

"Don't talk about that yet," said Bob.

"No, no, of course not."

Evidently the village at which they had breakfasted was merely a cattle station, for on the rest of the journey they marched along the same broad, cut roads, the up-keep of which probably, as in Uganda, was incumbent upon each local chief. As they descended into the valley the heat became appreciably greater; yet, as in the uplands of British East Africa, the air retained a crispness that suggested the altitude, which Stratton's altimeter gave as 6,420 feet, two thousand above the Uganda plateau and four thousand above the corridor of the Sémiliki valley.

The first large village was heralded by fairly extensive *shambas*—fields—of maize and sago and large sweet potatoes rather like yams. The huts were constructed upon practically the same architectural plan as the Waganda, a structure clearly traceable to Arabian influence. The large huts were foursquare with the closely thatched roof overlapping into a veranda. The palisade, instead of the merely primitive fence, was plaited in an almost elaborate design of grass and cane; and, after the irresponsible manner of medieval European cities, throughout the village the same broad roads wandered amid the scattered homesteads of a wealthy native people.

Whether or not some signal had been given, they could not know, but beyond a few grave looking elders and brown children peeping through the fences scarcely an individual was seen. As they left, they noticed upon a hillock a large hut, tall and conical shaped, which resembled identically the tombs of the Baganda kings at Kampala.

When the sun was nearly overhead, they reached another village and, at the young chief's invitation, entered a large compound which was evidently that of some one of importance. Here, on the earthen floor, within the cool chamber of a square hut, was a slightly raised dais

which, covered with reed-mats and a few skins, constituted the native bed.

The two were bidden to rest. Later some young girls with the more ebony complexion of the negro entered with platters of food, stewed goat, fowl and vast quantities of milk. After the repast an aged man with a light bronze complexion, gray-bearded and wearing a beaten-gold bangle similar to the young chief's, entered, squatted and murmured polite greetings. He stared contemplatively for a while but ventured no further remark. Shortly afterward, when Bob attempted to enter into conversation with their host, escort or captor, whichever he was, the soft brown eyes became clouded and he did not respond; at a repetition of the attempt he seemed to become embarrassed, rose, made a graceful inclination of his head and left the hut.

"Evidently we're in Coventry," commented Stratton.

"Guess they're forbidden or else too scared to talk with us until their witch-doctors have approved of us or turned us down," added Bob with a laugh.

"Possibly. Anyway, it's nice and cool here. If only one had a bath and a good cigar. Are there any cigarets left? Splendid! Let's have 'em. A—ah! You noticed the gold bangle?"

"They must be very rich in cattle," remarked Bob. "They must have tens of thousands up in the hills there as well as in the valley. But I haven't noticed any sign of ivory. Have you?"

"I did. Woman in the road there as we came in—slender girl, as sallow-like as our taciturn friend here—had several ivory bangles on her arms. By the way, d'you notice they've kept all their women more or less hidden? Quite a Mohammedan trick, what?"

"Fear of the evil eye more likely. I wonder where the white goddess is? We seem to be making for the middle of the valley."

"Yes, we dropped another five hundred feet in the last hour or two. The center of the valley can scarcely be more than about 3,000 feet above sea level. The more I see of the general lay of the land, the more I think it's probable that the forest way down to the south is an arm of the Ituri. Possibly it juts into this

mountain circle from the Semliki cañon which, up to the present, seems to have proved a fairly effectual bar to explorers and, quite as probably, to Arab traders. The pigmies would help a great deal to keep other tribes from contact with these people. Queer, though. I wonder what their legends are. Hullo, here's Archibald!"

The young chief entered and politely inquired whether the white people—he used a word for white man, from which the Luganda term is obviously derived—had rested sufficiently. Being assured that they had indeed, he begged that they would suffer themselves to continue the journey. He used phrases which did not afford any clue as to distance or objective.

THE lower they descended into the valley, the less of the countryside they could see. The character of the land began to alter; the park-like clumps of trees and open spaces gradually changed to patches of dense forest and richer vegetation, frequently dotted with tall palms. The larger villages in the valley appeared to be very thickly populated and the plantations of bananas covered many acres.

When they reached the largest village they had yet seen, the mountains behind them were mauve and violet and those in the distance, looming above the trees, were purple, and the sinking sun, shining on the clouds, cast a crimson aureole about their summits. They were led down a broad and regular avenue flanked by high palisades of plaited grass and cane which appeared to bisect the village, and just as they had caught the gleam of the water of a lake or river they were escorted into a compound where they were invited to camp.

"If that's a river," remarked Stratton as they waited for their food while squatting on some of their blankets set upon a native dais. "I wonder where the devil it flows to. South presumably, and therefore it must strike the Semliki. Devilish interesting. We must name it—the River Vardon, what?"

"That's a go!" said Bob, laughing. "My old mother will be tickled to death. And we'll christen the country Stratton Country, eh? What the devil's that?"

For a moment they sat staring at each other, conscious of an uncanny sensation which they could not define. Then, unmistakably, they felt the ground quiver. They sprang to their feet.

"Listen!" cried Stratton.

As they halted, there came to their ears a faint, prolonged moan which quickly died away into silence.

"What the deuce—" began Stratton.

"Earthquake!" said Bob. "That's the row it makes. Heard it before in Uganda. Look at the sun!"

Through a fringe of trees the sunset which had set aflame the corona of the mountains had turned to a dull glow like molten lead. Again, as they stood in the doorway, came the shiver beneath their feet, followed a few seconds afterward by the same lament as from a leviathan in pain.

"It's only a slight shock anyway," Bob had begun, when there began an uproar of voices, male and female.

The two men rushed to the gate of the compound, where by mutual consent they stopped, for the broad avenue through the village was seething with natives in their bark-cloth dress who were upon their knees banging their heads and whacking furiously with sticks, clubs and spears upon the ground.

Once more came the earth quiver, but this time the ensuing moan was overwhelmed by a renewed uproar of voices, each one of which appeared to be chanting the same insistent refrain:

*"Ya Obwakatonda-a! Nzuno-o! Nzuno-o!
Nzuno-o! Ya Obwakatonda-a! Nzu-uno-o-o!"*

(O God of Gods! I am here! I am here!
I am here! O God of Gods! I am here!)

"We'd better make ourselves scarce," said Bob quickly. "They think the earthquake's a god or something who may want a sacrifice."

VIII

THEY retired to their hut and sat in the doorway. The shouting ceased. Only an occasional gasp or cry broke the silence. The people, the trees and every living thing appeared to be listening intently. The twilight rushed upon them like the violet shadow of a great bird.

Over the mountains to the west the molten lead cooled to a dull glow. Minutes passed. The earth shook no more. A great sigh exhaled from the village. Muttering and chattering began and the soft whispering of bare feet.

"Well, I'm mighty glad that's over," commented Bob. "When they get worked up over an earthquake the Lord knows what they're apt to do in their attempts to appease the angry god."

"Angry god?" said Stratton musingly. "Are you sure what these people were crying?"

"Oh yes, distinctly. The same cry was repeated frequently."

"M-m. I've heard something of that before. As far as I recollect—forget who the authority was—they imagine the god to be in the earth and that he shakes his—er—temple, presumably in order to inquire how his people are getting along, you know."

"Nice way to say howdy," laughed Bob, "but that was the idea I'm sure. *Nzuno-o* means 'I am here,' evidently answering a kind of roll-call. I wonder what they do when there's a serious quake?"

"Sacrifice, without doubt," replied Stratton. "Gods always want blood. Haven't you noticed that? Terrible fellows," he sighed. "Hullo, here's Archibald again."

The form of the young chief loomed in the night, followed by the figures of young women bearing calabashes, which proved to contain supper. The white men deemed it impolite to question the taciturn Archibald, as Stratton had nicknamed him, for he had refused to give his name and had ignored every question on the subject. The people, in addressing him, merely used an equivalent of the word chief. As usual he squatted some while in silence and, at length, after making courteous inquiries for their welfare, stalked solemnly away.

At daybreak next morning they awoke to find that they were expected to march again. As they entered the compound they noticed that a small wizened old man with a gray tuft of beard had taken charge of them in place of Archibald. "Buddy," as Bob gravely addressed him, led them down through the village and across a shallow, swift-running stream

with high banks, which, evidently, in flood time was a deep, roaring river. A similar broadly cut road continued on the eastern side through dense forest.

Across swamps were crude bridges made of palm trunks and branches which, in many places, they noticed, had been smashed by the passage of elephants, whose tracks were more numerous than any Bob had ever seen in the Congo. In the denser jungle, too, where there were belts of the biting pest, *bukukuni*, there was quite a quantity of rubber vine which Stratton identified as *Clitandra orientalis*, *Landolphia dawei* and *florida* and some trees, *Funtumia elastica*. The timber was of good quality for building, particularly a tree with white cup-shaped flowers and egg-like fruit, which Bob said the Wun-yoro call *mutumba* and use to make their drums. One enormous tree, which neither had seen before, dominated its brethren in height and color, seeming a great bronze splash among the avid tropic green.

From the manner in which the monkeys failed to take instant flight, peering inquisitively from the branches, they concluded that they were regarded by the natives as sacred, probably lesser souls of the dead, as Stratton suggested. Among them the quaintly bearded colobus monkey was very common, and sometimes they saw several chimpanzees.

"Lord!" remarked Bob as they emerged again into an upland of park-like country. "This is the richest part of Africa I've ever seen! Beats the Congo or Uganda to a frazzle!"

"Perhaps," agreed Stratton, "but fortunately it's quite unworkable. The only way out, apparently, is through the forest and it would cost a fortune to make a road."

That afternoon, in the midst of a great banana plantation, they came to a small village, where they camped for the night. For three more days they marched, mostly through forest rich in rubber and wood of quality, thickly curtained with the rattan climbing palm and creepers. They saw elephants and more frequently heard them crashing their road through the jungle. Several times Bob attempted to draw the old man, who appeared more taciturn than Archibald, into conversation. Even to simple questions regarding

sport the only answer elicited was the inference that the natives never killed elephants.

"Yet the place is full of ivory," commented Bob.

"Maybe they obtain all they require—they use it only for the ornamentation of the chiefs, you will observe—from the elephants' private mausoleum," remarked Stratton.

"To think of it!" exclaimed Bob.

ON the fifth day they began to wind between the foot-hills and on the afternoon *safari* they came upon a vast banana plantation, which eventually led to what was evidently a very large village of several thousand huts. Among the numbers of bark-cloth clad people who lined the broad road they noticed a predominance of aquiline features, like those of the Bahima or the Somali. Many of the natives wore ivory bracelets, evidently denoting that they were persons of rank. Through the center of the village the road broadened out into almost the width of an avenue. In the large compounds of square and oblong houses, whose thatches extended into comfortable verandas, grew odd borassus palms and the phoenix. At the bottom of this boulevard was a hillock set against the mountainside, and peering above the frond-clad slopes they saw a tall, conical hut which, as Bob remarked, appeared to be a replica of the king's tomb in Kampala, Uganda.

In a silence that seemed almost ominous, the crowd, with the bashful stare of the native, stood solemnly regarding their progress. Just as Stratton had observed that all of the porters except the old man had disappeared, and was wondering how much farther they were to be taken and where, the soft throb of a drum began at some distance away. The sound immediately reacted upon the crowd, sending a whispering bustle of comment and discussion as it began to disperse.

When they approached the fringe of the banana plantation which covered the hill on which stood the conical hut, the old man stopped abruptly upon the threshold of a compound, in the center of which, amid several palms, there was a large house. In the doorway stood a

tall man who cried out softly. They halted irresolutely. Their escort gestured to them to advance, and the man within called an invitation.

"This must be the guest-house, I suppose," observed Bob as they entered a large room with a clean floor of beaten ant-heap and cow-dung, upon which were set wide mats of woven grass.

"Don't know," returned Stratton. "Appears to me as if there was some tabu connected with it by the way your friend Buddy shied on the threshold. By the way," he added suddenly, "did you notice that not one man in the whole of that crowd was armed?"

"Yes, that's so," confirmed Bob, "and come to think of it, neither were those in any of the villages except at the first cattle *kraal*."

"Probability is that they are a peaceable people." Stratton chuckled slightly.

"Having nobody to fight?" inquired Bob, grinning.

"But seriously that may be so. They appear as the legend says—cut off from any of the other tribes except, possibly, the pigmy. Obviously they are rich in cattle, fowl, goats, bananas and that meal stuff—what d'you call it? Therefore, they have no need to hunt game nor do they kill elephants, for there is no market. Clothes grow for them on trees. O fortunate people!"

"Sounds like the islands of the blest," commented Bob. "And here comes some of the good stuff."

Across the compound came young girls, slaves, judging by the ebony hue, bearing calabashes. Smiling shyly, they set at the feet of the white men boiled bananas, chicken wrapped in banana fronds, sweet potatoes, fish, fresh and sour milk and a bowl of a queer smelling liquid, which proved to be wine from the phoenix palm.

While they ate and drank Bob began to pose questions to their host or guardian, who was squatting gravely in the corner.

"Well?" queried Stratton after they had been talking for some time.

"Nothing doing," replied Bob, "though he's a little more talkative than Buddy. These swarthy girls are slaves—an inferior tribe; the 'People of the Mountains,' as they call themselves, are not

allowed to mate with them. All their children remain slaves."

"Did you ask him where they came from?"

"Yes, but he says they have been here since the first banana."

"Ah, that sounds like the Uganda legend of the creation. Well?"

"I tried to find out why nobody is allowed to speak to us and why we have been brought here, but nothing doing. He merely shuts up like a clam."

"— it!" snapped Stratton irritably, "this is becoming tiresome. Wonder how the deuce we're going to win their confidence. This fish is quite good. Try it! Looks like a species of river trout. Go on."

"Oh, well, then I tackled him about ivory, but he merely assumed that frozen-candy look."

"Well, try him on the goddess and see what happens."

After a little hesitation Bob began again to talk to the man. He was courteous but as sullenly taciturn as ever. At length, giving the cue to Stratton, Bob put a direct question concerning the white goddess. The thin features of light bronze remained immobile, but as swift as the shadow of a passing bat a glimpse of terror had crossed the soft brown eyes. Quietly but insistently Bob posed the question again. Quite a full minute passed before the man's lips moved.

"Thou shalt look upon the face of the one who dwells upon the hill, when the sun rises yet again," replied the man and, rising, he stalked solemnly from the hut and across the compound.

"Now what the deuce does he mean by that?" queried Stratton when Bob had translated.

"The goddess, d'you think?"

"I don't know. Don't think so. Yet, — it, she can't be alive still—unless the present one is a descendant of the woman who lived in the time of Ali's grandfather."

"But she'd have no one to marry here!"

"True. M-m—don't like the look of this mystery business. Appears to me as if we're being kept in holy tabu for something—ordeals by witchcraft or orgy."

"I wonder if they're cannibals?" sug-

gested Bob, suddenly eying the calabashes of food.

"Possibly," assented Stratton smiling. "This milk, banana and potato diet is very fattening, what?"

"Don't look like it," said Bob grimacing, "but you never know. The Mboga are—just the other side of the mountain there."

"Oh, well, I'll not make much more than an *hors d'œuvre* anyway. But you, my dear fellow," said Stratton, regarding Bob's physique, "well, really you'll make a splendid *pièce de résistance*—er—*homme rôti à l'Amérique*, what?"

"No, I'm too darn bony," retorted Bob, grinning. "Need about six months to fatten me up."

Rising, as if rather self-conscious of his charms from a gastronomic point of view and a bit proud of the position he would occupy on the menu, Bob began to pinch his biceps.

"Look here," he added, "they seem to have left us to ourselves this time. Let's take a stroll around just to see what will happen. Better take our guns, though. I'm not feeling fit for the pot yet."

THEY passed through the compound into the avenue, which seemed deserted.

"Better not butt into the temple on the hill here yet," suggested Bob, and they turned toward the west.

The yellow sunshine was streaming the patterns of the huts and palms across the road. In the next compound Bob, peering over the fence, saw three women grinding corn in the rear of the hut and several children playing amid some chickens and a mangy dog or two. They walked on down a street and peered through the gate of another house. On the veranda, upon mats, were seated two women, one young and slender and the other an old dame. They looked up as the white men stared, and the younger called out softly.

"What does she say?" demanded Stratton impatiently.

"She invites us to come in, as far as I understand."

"Well, come along, then! She's a woman, therefore she'll talk more than these secretive blighters. What's the matter?" he asked as Bob hung back.

"I don't know," said Bob diffidently. "Perhaps we ought not to?"

"Ought not to!" Stratton stared up at him and laughed. "You silly ass! What's worrying you?"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Bob. "I meant that perhaps it's not etiquette and——"

Again the young woman who had been watching the white men taking counsel together called out with a new imperative note in the voice.

"Come on!" said Stratton, striding to the gate. "She's evidently a lady, too. Look at the bangles!"

The bark-cloth shawl was wound about a figure in the full maturity of native womanhood. She stood up as they approached, and Bob noticed that her forearms and legs were sheathed in ivory bangles, a fact which, in conjunction with her light bronze complexion and aquiline features, denoted that she was of the ruling caste. Exhibiting the perfect teeth of her kind in a shy smile, she bade the white men to be seated. As they obeyed she called aloud in a high falsetto, in answer to which presently appeared two dark slaves bearing milk and wine. The elder woman, who appeared to be a subordinate, sat motionless and silent.

After the lengthy formal greetings she began a rain of questions as to where the white men came from and what their country and their women were like. Not until they were discussing the affair afterward did Bob notice that she omitted to inquire where they were going.

As she insisted, they politely drank some of the wine. To a question as to whether she had ever seen white men before, she answered frankly that she had not and then added, after a slight hesitation, a mysterious statement which quickened Bob's interest. The statement was to the effect that their doctors always talked with white people.

"The white goddess," murmured Stratton when Bob swiftly translated. "Ask her!"

For a moment the reaction seemed about to be the same as that upon the host at the guest-house; then, gravely, she responded that the white men were their fathers and their mothers. Just as her lips began upon a new sentence, she ceased abruptly.

Glancing around, they saw their old escort Buddy standing solemnly in the doorway. Perceiving that his presence had obviously sealed her lips, Bob began to talk about elephants. The old man interrupted, very courteously requesting the white strangers to retire. Under the circumstances they had no option but to obey. Stratton observed that the girl and the old man did not address each other.

"Deuced queer," he commented as they reached their own hut. "The silence on the subject of the goddess I quite understand. Tabu, of course. Do you notice that they don't appear to have any interest in or fear of our guns? And also apparently we're free to wander about the place wherever we wish."

"No, I can't get that, either," returned Bob. "I wonder what old Buddy meant by that phrase about looking upon the face of the one up on the hill—the goddess?"

"Possibly the chief or head witch-doctor. Actual names of people are always tabu, as you know, lest some evil person cast a spell upon them—same principle as hair-cuttings and what not. But—er—I should scarcely think that they would let us see the sacred goddess—if there is one, recollect—without having to undergo some form of magic purification. That is their usual—er—ceremony—not confined to natives obviously. Lord, I wish I had a cigaret!"

IX

SOUNDS of a turkey gobbling awoke them. Sitting up on his mat in his shirt, Stratton began—

"What the deuce—" and sneezed violently.

Immediately Bob imitated him with greater volume of noise and expression. Against the square of light of the door, through a cloud of pungent smoke, they could discern a dark form crouched in the center of the hut mumbling industriously.

"Witch-doctor!" spluttered Bob.

"Precisely," assented Stratton. "Better—achoo! —! Better keep still while we're—achoo! —!—we're being disinfected."

As they sat quietly the witch-doctor

frequently plucked dried herbs or some substance from a tiny wallet which he carried upon his girdle and cast them upon the fire. At length, as the acrid fumes became less dense, they could distinguish that the wizard was a man in the prime of life, with an imposing goatee of black, and on his tonsured skull the center wool was mixed with some sticky matter which caused it to stand up like an absurd dunce's cap set drunkenly on the head. Upon the lizard-like claws that were his hands, there were mystic marks in red ochre.

"The doc may want to vaccinate us," murmured Bob. "Guess we'd better not kick if he does. I wonder if he'll condescend to chat a bit after he's through with it."

"Don't know," said Stratton. "Didn't your Buddy friend say something about looking on the face of the one up on the hill? Probably this is the beginning of an initiation for the orgy."

"But why are you so set upon this orgy idea? They may introduce us to the chief or the white goddess. Most tribes don't eat or slaughter a white man unless some fair excuse is given. Livingstone, for example, strolled around all over the darned country and——"

"Precisely. But Livingstone returned, did he not?"

"Yes. But——"

"You appear to have forgotten the legend, my dear fellow."

"The legend! Oh!" Bob stopped abruptly and looked at his little partner. "By heaven, that's right. I had! But—but why should——"

"That's what I've come here to discover. That strangers are not in the habit of returning from this charming country is more or less corroborated by the fact that these people have no fear of us and, moreover, show not the slightest sign of contact with modern Africa—guns, I mean. One might say that the pigmies have no guns, but then these fellows are as highly developed as the Waganda, to whom they are evidently related."

"But what makes you so sure about the orgy business?"

"On merely general grounds. Fever evidently is not responsible for all the victims—natives as well, recollect, and

the healthy state of the people precludes the probability of any insidious disease such as sleeping sickness. No, I have a pretty theory, worked up on a basis of folklore, that we shall find that the white goddess is some form of a fetish derived from some natural phenomenon—earthquake, probably, in this region—which demands the sacrifice of every alien; evidently an amusing custom which has been nourished by the fortunate geographical situation—so many things are geographical, aren't they? The British Empire, what?"

"But why the orgy?"

"Merely because every form of worship of a deity in any age or clime has been made an excuse—often unconscious—for the release of desires—a kind of safety valve. Extremely interesting!"

"From the goat's point of view?"

"Most precisely," assented Stratton, smiling grimly. "As long as the goat's desire is satisfied first!"

"Um," grunted Bob, grimacing, "you've certainly got one on me if to know what it's all about is your only desire. Hello, now what's next on the programme?" he asked as, squatting back upon his haunches, the witch-doctor addressed them.

"That which is clean may walk in the presence of the one," said the man softly. Then, rising, he departed.

"Now we're going to start in on the chute the chutes!" exclaimed Bob.

"Probably," assented Stratton, "but I fear that we sha'n't see her white ladyship today."

"Why not? We've been all dolled up, as they say, for something."

"Well, I hope not," said Stratton, lacing his boots, "for, as I implied, I want to know before the end."

"The end!" exclaimed Bob ceasing to pull on his breeches. "What the——For Heaven's sake get that bug out of your head! Anyway, here's some grub to fatten you up a bit."

SLAVES brought such a quantity of food and drink that Bob's malicious inference appeared to be justified. However, neither man stinted himself on that account. Long before the sun was yet out of the mists above the eastern mountains, their escort, Buddy, appeared and,

after the usual elaborate greetings, bade them to follow him.

"The most extraordinary thing," remarked Stratton as they were led toward the hill covered by bananas, "is that nobody seems to take any notice of us."

"Oh, we'll probably get in the Sunday editions," retorted Bob flippantly.

"Well, that is exactly the same instinct which causes that—er—phenomenon known as a Sunday edition. But seriously, with the exception of the mild crowd who witnessed our arrival, not a soul seems to have any interest in us. Now in any village, white or black, women, children and most idle men would be staring all day long and following us wherever we moved. Most abnormal!"

"Probably we're still under a tabu," suggested Bob.

"Possibly. Yet they allowed us to wander at will without any apparent precautions against our evil eye, and that, you recollect, was before our—er—disenchantment this morning."

As they reached the crest of the hill in a dense grove of bananas, they came abruptly upon a high and thick palisading over which rose a great tree, hiding the tall, conical building they had seen from below.

"This can't be a tomb," whispered Bob, "or they wouldn't be taking us there."

"Unless they intend to bury us immediately," suggested the little Englishman maliciously.

"Oh, quit it!" snapped Bob as they entered into the outer compound. "If you're set on being killed, what the devil did you take the trouble to come here for?"

Within the palisading was a long house with open frame walls, beneath which were lounging some dozen men on mats. Near them were drums large and small and Baganda lyres, first invented by some ancient genius who superimposed a frame of bamboo upon a drum, from which he strung twisted fiber. Although several heads were turned curiously in the direction of the whites, there was the same lack of normal curiosity.

"If they won't talk we may, at all events, observe," remarked Stratton. "This must be a council house, which

gives us an idea of their form of government."

"Perhaps, but look at that!" cried Bob.

He pointed to the interior palisade, which was constructed of ivory—whole tusks planted in the ground and curved in menacing fangs toward the intruder. Behind this formidable barrier was a tall grass fence. As they passed through the gate, Bob stopping a moment to examine the quality of the nearest tusk, which proved to be very ancient, they beheld a large courtyard, at the rear of which was the tall, conical hut they had seen from the village. In front of it stood a great tree of enormous girth with radiating buttresses, which Bob said the Baganda call *muhindi* (*Cynometra alexandri*).

Beneath the shade of the dense foliage, upon a wooden stool, sat a withered old man wrapped, rather than clad, in reddish bark-cloth, his bony limbs covered with ivory bangles. Beside him squatted the witch-doctor who had performed the ceremony of purification and two of his brethren, their profession denoted by the same absurd dunce's cap of matted wool.

AS they reached the mats placed in front of the group, Bob saluted in military fashion and Stratton salaamed. Then they gravely sat down and remained silent. The mild, watery eyes of the old man stared with the interrogative expression of a small child in the presence of an adult, and on the features of the witch-doctors appeared not a quiver. On the still warm air came softly the irregular twang of a lyre.

For fully ten minutes white faced bronze in silence, the natives as still as graven images, while the strangers took this advantage to study them. The skull of the chief was that of a very ancient man; the feeble growth of white wool revealed the exact contours covered with a network of tiny veins; the eyes were so dim that they appeared blind; the head rather drooped upon the column of the neck, which was as withered as that of an old tortoise. Beneath the edge of the bark-cloth robe Stratton espied the butt of a rifle. The three doctors were lithe, powerful men in the prime of life.

At length Bob called out softly the formal greeting to a chief. Immediately one of the wizards replied, but the old

man apparently did not understand or had not heard. Continuing to address the chief, Bob delivered a harangue, previously agreed upon, which stated their joy and satisfaction in the presence of the great chief whom they had journeyed so far to see, their desire to know his people and to see the country of which their brother whites had so often heard but which none had as yet seen.

The one point they felt to be weak in this speech was the absence of any mention of gifts, a subject which was carefully avoided for the reason that they had nothing to give, save their rifles. However, strangely they thought, no reference or even hint of the customary presents was made by the witch-doctor, who continued to act as spokesman.

When Bob boldly asked whether they had ever seen a white before, they ignored the question in the irritating manner which the previous natives had assumed. They appeared unanimously agreed not to give any information. Their interest seemed concentrated upon the ways of white men, the tribes through which the travelers had passed, and exactly how they had effected an entrance into the country. Never once did they show a glimmer of curiosity as to what the white men wanted or where they were going.

"This is deuced irritating," muttered Stratton when Bob reported swiftly. "Apparently we're never going to get any details until—er—we see the white goddess. Give him a full shot regarding her ladyship and watch the reaction."

When Bob did so, the witch-doctors proved themselves even better trained than the local host, for not the faintest flicker passed across their eyes, nor did they appear even to have heard the question at all.

"Nothing doing, old man," murmured Bob. "But this silent business is getting on my nerves. Shall we announce that we're going?"

At that moment the ancient one moved his arms slightly and in this action the bark-cloth fell away, revealing a muzzle-loading rifle of an obsolete type.

"Wait a moment! That gun looks interesting. I wonder where the devil he got it?"

To this question the witch-doctor con-

descended to reply that the gun—magic stick—had come from the land of the whites many, many moons ago. At last he seemed to exhibit some real interest, for he wished to know whether the magic sticks the white men carried had come from the same tribe as the muzzle-loader.

"I can not tell until I see the tribal marks upon the face," retorted Bob and, leaning forward, he took the gun from the unresisting hands of the ancient chief.

"Look!" whispered Stratton, pointing to the maker's name upon the barrel. "'Harvey'—an English gun—and here on the stock. What's the name? 'Wilk—Wilkinson, 1884.' Now who the deuce was Wilkinson?"

He combed his memory for a few moments and then cried:

"I've got it! That must have been George Redden Wilkinson, the English explorer who attempted to cross Africa from Zanzibar. He started, if my memory's correct, in 1880 and utterly disappeared. He did a lot of work in the Nile provinces. I wonder whether he found the white goddess!"

"Oh, he may merely have died of fever," commented Bob. "He probably gave this gun as a present."

"Precisely," agreed Stratton. "He may have, but then again he may not. Look at the barrel. Evidently they haven't any ammunition, for this gun has not been fired for many years."

As Bob handed back the ancient gun he solemnly informed the silent chief that the gun had come from the same tribe as his small brother. What the ancient man thought of the information was not revealed by the slightest expression.

"Look here," urged Stratton a little impatiently after they had sat again in silence, regarded by the three wizards, "we'd better adjourn this interesting debate."

Bob announced that they would retire to their quarters. Although exasperated, the whites were punctilious to make their salutes to the chief, who was, as before, still staring mildly at nothing in particular. Their escort followed them. Turning at the gate of the ivory palisade, they stood a moment to look around. Ap-

parently no other hut was within the central compound except the tall, conical one. Stratton suggested that they ramble around. Rather to their amazement the escort acquiesced courteously.

FOLLOWING the outside of the ivory fence to the right, they came upon another fence and, passing through, entered what appeared to be a small village of small square houses, which Bob learned was the quarters of the royal wives of the old chief, sacred too, apparently, although their children were free to live in the big village beneath. Little of interest could they discover save a closer view of the conical hut, or temple, of the chief.

"I guess that quake staved in the top," remarked Bob, referring to the apex, which appeared to have collapsed from within. "I wonder if they keep the old man there?"

"Probably," assented Stratton. "From the look of things I gather that he's merely the sacred dummy. As is often the case when the king or chief is not a magician, the wizards are the government. Sounds quite civilized, what?" He chuckled.

A few yards farther on where the ground began to slope they came upon a large compound with small huts built along the fringe of the banana plantation, in front of which, squatting in rows patiently as if waiting for something to happen, like a herd of cattle in a pen, were about fifty girls each with her head shaved and smeared with red ochre.

"Good Lord!" commented Stratton, observing them. "Those daubs remind one of sheep marked out for the butcher! They can't be the old man's wives nor his children, for there isn't one over fourteen. Ask your friend Buddy."

To Bob's question the man merely replied that they were virgins.

"Speak to them yourself," urged Stratton.

Bob did so, but the only effect was that those who had not already caught sight of the white men now turned their heads to stare.

"I'm sick of this mystery stunt," declared Bob vexedly.

"Precisely," agreed Stratton, "but, my dear fellow, I don't quite see yet how the

deuce we're going to solve it. It's the most extraordinary experience I've ever encountered. Certainly their courtesy is not so unusual, but there is neither open nor covert hostility. They appear to have no interest in our goods or even to be suspicious of our object. Most extraordinary!"

Attended patiently by the old man, they returned toward the conical hut, but nowhere, except where they had entered, was there an opening in the formidable ivory hedge, and, at the first motion to enter the inner enclosure again, their escort interposed his lean body between them and the gate.

"— him!" grumbled Bob. "I've a good mind to throw the sulky old fool over the darned ivory fence."

"That would merely precipitate trouble," said Stratton. "Later we may possibly be able to investigate more thoroughly."

"You English are darned irritating sometimes," snapped the big man. "Well, come along then."

They strolled down the hill. The large, heavily fenced compounds were evidently the residences of chiefs or witch-doctors and entry was forbidden. They were allowed to wander at will through the maze of tiny lanes on either side of the boulevard, a kind of king's highway, running through the center of the village, which must contain, they estimated, somewhere near to eight or ten thousand inhabitants. As each homestead seemed to have an unusually developed desire of privacy, denoted by the high fence enclosing each one, they could not see much of the domestic life and, at that time of the day, most of the able-bodied men and women were away, presumably working in the vast banana *shambas*.

They finally returned to their quarters to discuss what the council of wizards was likely to do and what their next move should be. As the flare died out above the eastern mountains, which they could see from their hut door, appeared three slaves bearing calabashes and behind them the old woman whom they had seen with the young girl on the previous afternoon. As the burdens were placed at the feet of the white men the old woman squatted down and muttered several sentences which brought a curious

expression upon Bob's bearded face. He seemed to hesitate before replying.

"My dear fellow, what the deuce is the matter?" queried Stratton, watching Bob's despondent stare at the retreating form of the old woman.

"The young one's a princess person," said Bob gloomily, "one of the numerous daughters of the chief."

"That's more or less what I imagined from her bangles and that sort of thing. Well?"

Bob glanced at his partner gravely and swore softly.

"These presents—" he began and stopped awkwardly. "Do you know the Baganda custom of princesses?"

"Custom of Baganda princesses?" repeated Stratton perplexedly. "Why—what—"

"The moral code—"

"Moral— You mean that Baganda princesses are licensed to—er—carry out their desires with whomsoever it may please their royal whim? My dear fellow, do you mean to say the lady has chosen you?" He stopped to laugh.

"Nothing to laugh at," grumbled Bob. "Monkeying with native women always leads to trouble. Besides, I'm not that sort."

"Of course not. One doesn't," said Stratton. "But my dear old man, don't you see that through her we, or rather you, may get her to talk? We can't make plans or do anything until we know more or less whether they intend to eat us or deify us, and it's usually one way or the other with mankind."

"That's right," admitted Bob reluctantly. "But, — it man, she's coming to see me! What the devil's there to laugh at?" he added. "I'm no fool squire of dames."

"All right. Don't get wild, my dear fellow," said Stratton. "And anyway, see what the lady's sent you."

Rather sulkily Bob drew a calabash to him and took off the woven grass lid, revealing sweet potatoes and an unplucked chicken.

"Ripping taste I must admit, old man," scoffed Stratton teasingly. "Now for the other."

As he raised the second lid they both exclaimed in surprise, for, lying in a golden, yellow bowl, obviously shaped

after the pattern of a natural calabash, was a bracelet also fashioned in gold.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Stratton examining it. "This must be the replica of the Arab's bangle. This pattern work is undoubtedly of Egyptian or Phoenician origin."

"And feel the weight of this," added Bob, handling the golden bowl. "It must be nearly pure, it's so soft!"

X

SHE appeared before them in the twinkling tropic silence as silently as a lizard, a slender, tall figure of jasper and chalcedony in the blue light of the moon. Her hips swayed rhythmically as if to the mutter of the drums upon the hill. The two whites were sitting on the threshold of the hut door. As she greeted him Bob rose, but Stratton slunk into deeper shadow.

"Don't be a — fool!" admonished Bob hastily, half-turning toward him.

Aware that the other white man was there, the girl shrank back as if alarmed. Hastily Bob returned the greetings and politely begged her to be seated. Standing with one bronze foot poised as if for flight, she replied naïvely that she had come to see the white man who was like unto a palm tree.

The native phrasing did not embarrass Bob as much as the words would have done in English. He ignored the statement and, after requesting her again to be seated, began a stumbling offer of thanks for the magnificent presents. Diffidently she subsided on her haunches. Bob and Stratton squatted down. No one spoke.

"Talk to her," urged Stratton quietly. "It's our only chance, apparently, of getting any information. We must find out where that gold was found."

Although he was willing, Bob suddenly discovered difficulties in opening a conversation with a savage lady who was determined to woo him. He was also conscious of the soft eyes that, in the shadows, appeared to be alluring as were her aquiline features. Goaded into saying something, he plunged at random, asking pointblank why nobody else was allowed to talk to them.

The question appeared to puzzle the

girl considerably, although, native-like, she showed little of her emotions visibly. Thinking that she was about to shut up like a clam as the others had done, Bob continued hurriedly to tell her that they had been taken to the great hut upon the hill, and he asked her who the ancient man was with the wizards.

The little speech possibly gave her time to recollect that perhaps it was the custom of white men to rebuff a woman's advances; or, more probably, she realized that, as it was the man's good pleasure to so act, she should hasten to obey her chosen lord.

Timidly she smiled and made answer that the old man was the chief, the one up on the hill, which, as Bob inferred, was the only permissible name by which to call the sacred person. Once having persuaded her to accept the desired rôle, he found it much easier to continue and to his relief discovered that she at any rate was not inclined to relapse into a sulky silence. Pressing this advantage, he proceeded with a string of questions, to nearly all of which she replied.

Once, so interested had he become, when Stratton, perforce deaf to all save gestures, impatiently demanded news, Bob told him sharply to shut up and leaned forward in a manner that really had a semblance to that of a lover drinking thirstily his lady's words.

Stratton's simple psychology proved correct. Even Bob, in the interest awakened by such revelations as she made, forgot the love element. Some questions she was unable to answer, even though she, as one of the royal family, knew many of the secrets of the wizard's cult which were denied to laymen. To the throbbing of the drums upon the hill, she talked in the soft, vowel-sounding tongue. The moon, rising higher in the green arc, painted in pale jasper a small bronze foot in jade and ivory bangles. At last, tense with excitement, Bob turned to Stratton and rapidly whispered his report.

"SHE says that the gold comes from a valley not far from here, and that they like the color and that it is easier to get and softer to work than the iron which is used by a section of the tribe to the south near the forest, which makes all the

spears and knives. It must be an alluvial deposit and untouched. Think of it!"

"Well, what about the white goddess?"

"Oh, the goddess! As you saw, she didn't go up in the air at all when I put the question. She says—and I think she's speaking the truth—that she has never seen the white goddess; that no one has, for it is death to look upon her, save the wizards who are provided with a marvelous charm."

"The same legend as the Arab related."

"Exactly! She says that the goddess lives somewhere in a valley near here which is called the valley of the elephants. That is where these royal bangles come from. The elephants are the souls of departed chiefs and so they are sacred. The monkeys are souls of the ordinary people, so, if the natives kill them, the angry soul will come and slay them. Of course she won't tell me the name of the old chief up there because it is forbidden; any one who did so would immediately drop dead."

"Did you ask her whether we could visit the valley of elephants?"

"Yes. She says that we must not, and then immediately said that we must—that all strangers have to go through what I think she considers an ordeal. As far as I can make out, it is merely to walk through this enchanted valley, but, as the goddess is there, no one ever returns, except the wizards of course."

"Ah! Some witch-doctor's trick! Now what——"

"She doesn't know. Only the wizards know that. She implies that the goddess is white and has lived—but she uses a word which is applied only to souls—ever since the first banana. You know the phrase. What on earth can she be? Evidently not alive, in the ordinary sense."

"An idol perhaps."

"She doesn't seem to have an idea. She says that the goddess lives in the earth and when she is angry she shakes the ground so that the houses fall down."

"H-m. Interesting. Did she say what they intend to do with us?"

"Yes. I told you. She says that all strangers are compelled to go through the ordeal of walking through the magic valley, apparently to visit the white god-

dess of the earth upon whom it is death to look—except for the wizards.”

“When?”

“She doesn’t know. She says—” Bob’s face suddenly took on a new expression. “You see we are the first whites she’s ever seen and she has an idea that if—if—well, if she had a child by a white man the child would be white and therefore become a mighty wizard, greater than all the wizards here.”

“Rotten biology,” said Stratton, “but still——”

“Oh, shut up! She’s rather wonderful in a way—I mean unspoiled natives always are. She talks about such things as a child would. Hasn’t the least idea of—of—you know what I mean.”

“Proprieties, what?”

“Well, yes. You can’t be angry with her. But of course that’s impossible.”

“Does she offer to save our—or your life if you consent.”

“Oh, no!” said Bob indignantly. “She says nothing can do that. She wants—well, this proposed arrangement before we go to see the goddess so that—if they don’t catch her—well, the little wizard would come long. And also, as far as I gather, she dares not come here again, for, if the wizards caught her they would put her to death right away.”

“Breaking the tabu, what? Is that why no one is allowed to talk to us?”

“Yes. They are forbidden to speak to strangers until those strangers have passed through the ordeal—that no one has ever done apparently. Also she infers that no layman knows anything of importance; only the chiefs a little, and the wizards.”

“She is then breaking the tabu to tell you all this?”

“Yes, —— it! But then she’s already done that by coming to see us.”

“You’re sure she doesn’t know any more about the valley of elephants and the goddess of the earth?”

“Oh, quite sure,” asserted Bob with the same indignant tone in his voice. “She wants to help us as much as she can, but she can’t do anything else.”

“M-m,” murmured Stratton. “Does she know anything about Wilkinson, or rather has she heard, for she’s too young to have seen him?”

“I’ll ask her.”

BUT, as Bob turned to the patient figure squatting in the gloom, there came from the hill of the temple, above the steady mutter of the drums, a scream which was followed by another and another until it seemed as if there were a hundred voices. The terrible chorus of agonized shrieks rose and dropped, broke out into a crescendo and died into a persistent wailing punctuated intermittently by solitary screams.

“My ——! What devilry are they up to?”

“Ask her!” urged Stratton.

Bob turned to the glimmer of soft eyes in the shadow. Tranquilly she replied, as if answering a request for some bananas and milk. Bob swore and made an abrupt movement as if to rise angrily. Instead, he leaned toward Stratton and said grimly:

“These —— fiends! They’re slaughtering that crowd of girls we saw on the hill there, to appease the anger of the earth goddess who, with the earthquake, shook down the roof of the temple.”

“Slaughtering them! How?”

“Sticking them on that ivory fence we saw. Ugh! My ——! what can we do?”

“Nothing,” said Stratton sharply.

Bob glared angrily at the moonlit compound.

“She says something about that being the usual mode of sacrifice. My ——!”

“Waiting for us, does she mean?”

“Eh? I don’t know. Hark at the poor devils!”

The screams had diminished to a persistent low moaning.

“She’s a fiend!” muttered Bob again, as if talking to drown the dreadful wailing. “She knew all the time what was going to happen and that was why she came to see us. Nobody is allowed out of his hut tonight, and the wizards are busy up there.”

He moved his great shoulders convulsively, as if desirous to run up the hill to the rescue of the victims. Yet what could they do? Reason told him that they could not do anything. Any wild attempt would merely lead to their immediate slaughter as well—even with their two guns. They might kill a lot of the fiends, but to what end?

"Keep quiet, old man," urged Stratton gently. "We can't do anything now."

They sat as if enveloped in a web of silent horror, listening to the subdued wailing above the callous throb of the drums. The rustle of a bark-cloth robe drew Bob's attention as the girl spoke softly.

"No!" exclaimed Bob angrily in English and added an emphatic refusal in Luganda.

Again came her soft vowels. Again from Bob—

"*Neda! Neda! Kya neda!* (No! No! Never!)"

For several moments the girl sat motionless. Guessing at the subject of the big man's energetic refusal, Stratton watched keenly, half expecting violence of some sort, but he had forgotten for the moment that no native has the passionate blood of a Latin or a Malay. Yet she was proud, this African lady of aquiline features and body like woven bronze. She seemed to grow to her full height and, turning without one word, glided across the compound openly in the full light of the moon.

Stratton, recalling the ways of the Bahima whom these people so much resembled, realized her purpose, for he knew that, by deliberately exposing the fact that she had broken the tabu by visiting the strangers at night, she was committing suicide. Bob did not know this.

The open gates in the fence swallowed her. The two whites sat on in silence listening to the throbbing, wailing orgy of blood upon the hill.

"What are we going to do?" asked Bob once more.

"My dear fellow, what can we do?" said Stratton quietly.

"Let's go out!" urged Bob presently, reaching for his gun.

"Do you insist upon being massacred immediately?" demanded Stratton. "We shall never discover the secret of the goddess nor get the gold and ivory if we lose our heads."

"— the gold and ivory!" snapped Bob.

XI

"BUCK up, old man!" said Stratton, lying on his stomach, watching the first pallor of dawn through the moun-

tain mists. "That's merely normal Africa."

Bob was squatting on the threshold, savagely regarding the tree-tops from whence floated the persistent throb of the drums. He turned his head slowly and looked at his partner.

"It gets me," he said. "Kind of makes me sick to the stomach, this meaningless slaughter—of women."

"Pirates' blood rather puts the red into gold, but this rather takes the color out of it, what?"

"It isn't that at all. I mean it rouses a man. You're so darned cynical and callous."

"No, I'm not—merely much older. Perhaps I've mingled too long with the gentle savage to mind little excesses such as that. Besides, we mustn't boast too much, my dear fellow, for it's not so very long ago that we were burning harmless old women as witches, what?"

"That's right," admitted Bob reluctantly, "but still we have gone some distance since those days. Well, what d'you think's going to happen now?"

"H-m, I have been considering that very subject. If I am not mistaken I think that the—er—dinner party will begin today after the *hors d'œuvres* up on the hill, as one might say, what?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"The problem is: What is the secret of the death valley from which only wizards are immune? Apparently, and quite reasonably from the native point of view, if we get through what the legend says no other stranger has ever done, we shall—er—have the run of the lodge as full-blown masons."

"I'm ready!" exclaimed Bob, sitting up. "It would do a fellow good to do something. Sitting here waiting and listening gets on my nerves. What's that?"

A sharp shriek leaped above the throb of the drums and sank into a prolonged scream.

"They're at it again!"

Bob scrambled to his feet angrily.

"Be reasonable!" admonished Stratton.

Bob turned on his partner.

"Look here!" he snapped. "If you want to sit here and listen to murder you may. I can't! Get me?"

"Precisely," agreed Stratton quietly.

"I'm not finking, but if you will tell me what you propose to do I shall be delighted to help you, providing I see that something can be accomplished other than—er—premature suicide."

Bob glared at him angrily. To imagine that the little Englishman was scared Bob knew was absurd, but he was always too reasonable.

"You're right, old top," he said shortly and sat down again.

They had longer to wait than Stratton had estimated. When the sun was pouring daylight through the mists there came, as usual, the calabashes of food and milk. Stratton ate heartily and encouraged Bob to do so, for, as he said, they might soon have need of all the nourishment obtainable.

Throughout the day the drums up on the hill continued without cessation. Nobody, except their own attendant at the guest-house, came near them. Bob naturally grew more and more impatient and irritable. Only with great difficulty did the older man persuade him to remain in the house. To go out or interfere when evidently a great feast was in progress and consequently the savages would be worked up to an hysterical state of emotion would merely precipitate certain disaster.

As Stratton insisted, the only chance of attaining their various ends and also of eventually abolishing or retarding the murder parties, would be by gaining some authority and confidence in the tribe. This, obviously, could be accomplished only by successfully passing the ordeal. What that ordeal would prove to be they spent most of the time discussing but, as they had such meager data to work upon, the most ingenious hypothesis was most likely very wide of the truth.

WHEN the moon was issuing from the livid mists almost at the apex of her arc, there came to them a summons brought by Buddy, who courteously bade them to follow him into the presence of the one up on the hill.

The village, as they passed down the broad street with their rifles under their arms, appeared deserted save for an odd dog or so who yapped at them. They walked in silence, Bob with his long legs,

tending to stride on ahead of both his partner and the guide.

"The most extraordinary thing," remarked Stratton as they entered the gloom of the banana plantation, "is that they don't seem to take any precaution to guard us."

"As it was such a devil of a job to get into the place, they probably think that it would be as difficult to get out," commented Bob.

"And they're probably right too," assented Stratton. "Also, possibly they have never had any experience with a prisoner or guest, whichever you please, attempting to do such things. I wonder what Wilkinson thought about it and what he discovered."

"We'll know mighty soon, I guess. Here's the first stockade."

Immediately upon entering the open they heard the throb of distant drums, evidently coming from the mountainside. As they walked across the outer courtyard, Bob started back with an oath. Draped in the clarity of the bright moonlight upon the fangs which formed the ivory barrier were the nude bodies of the slain virgins. Bob began to swear to relieve his feelings. Then he halted again. He pointed in speechless rage to a mass like a Rodin bronze which was transfixed upon the point of the first tusk to the right of the gate. The green of the ivory was streaked with black, and the moonlight revealed the torture-twisted face of the princess.

Bob, in his rage, would have shot the guide upon the spot, but the naïve bearing of the man, who seemed utterly unaware either of fear or of anything unusual that could possibly excite any emotion, together with Stratton's restraining hand upon the rifle and his urgent counsel, calmed Bob's wrath and persuaded him to pass through the gate of horror with averted eyes.

"That's my fault for consenting to see the girl," said Bob in a low voice as they walked on.

"Not at all," affirmed Stratton. "She deliberately committed suicide, when you refused her, by walking boldly out of the gate. She knew that she would be seen and she knew the penalty she would have to pay for breaking the tabu. It's not your fault in the least."

"But good Lord, what could I do?" protested Bob, fortunately distracted from the effect to the cause. "I couldn't possibly be expected to know that, could I?"

"Of course you couldn't. But, my dear fellow, she thinks black; naturally you think white. Neither can enter into the other's world. But never mind that. We've got to run our own picnic now."

From the gloomy recesses of the great *mahindu* tree materialized the familiar forms of the three witch-doctors. The decrepit chief was not visible. Simultaneously with their appearance, the drums ceased. The ensuing silence, after the ears had been accustomed to so many hours of the rhythmic beats, was unnerving. Other sounds, the whisper of the great tree, the shuffle of feet on the soil, even their own breathing, were distorted—became sinister. The world about them seemed to be waiting with bated breath. The three wizards turned mutely. The guide stepped back as if deferentially.

"Shall we follow?" queried Stratton.

"Yes. Let's see it through," whispered Bob grimly.

THEY followed the three fantastic figures into the gloom of the buttressed tree and came out upon the other side in front of the conical hut, which they discovered to cover a greater area than they had supposed. They crossed the moonlit space toward a low door into which the witch-doctors had gone. Bob doubled his body and followed.

On crossing the threshold he began to cough. In the gloom before the entry a figure crouched over a smoldering fire. They paused to glance around.

"What the deuce are they up to now?" demanded Stratton.

"Dunno," replied Bob. "I thought they kept the old chief here. Hello! What the devil——"

Two of the witch-doctors had vanished. The third, he who had disinfecting them, they could discern by the dull glow of the fire. All but his breast had disappeared. He was speaking softly.

"He says we're to follow him into the womb of the mother."

Bob took a pace forward.

"Look out! There's a great hole here!"

The head of the witch-doctor sank into the black void. Bob sat down gingerly and began to feel with his feet.

"It seems like the edge of a crater," he reported, "and there's a kind of step here."

Then he in turn slid in up to his waist.

"Mind, it's fairly deep!"

"Can't be a crater—isn't big enough. Probably a pot-hole," remarked Stratton as he rolled on to his stomach and, using his rifle as a slight balance, began to lower himself over the edge. As Bob steadied the little Englishman on to his feet on the first step, shoulder-deep for him, a queer vibrating voice came from below them.

"Darn his black soul!" muttered Bob indignantly. "He's telling us to hurry. Here, wait while I strike a match."

The tiny flare showed the space about them, the gleam of whites of eyes below them and crude steps. As the match flickered out Bob threw it from him. The glowing end curved into a straight fall.

"Look out!" warned Bob. "It's a devil of a job for any one wearing boots, and about twenty or thirty feet deep."

Long legs proved an advantage. They arrived at last upon what felt to be booted feet as water-worn rock. Again came the soft injunction to follow.

"Confound him!" Stratton remarked, "they must have eyes like a cat. I wonder what——"

The remark was cut short by a violent exclamation from Bob, who had walked into a blank wall. He struck another match and found that they were standing in a circular hole of rock and that, apparently, the witch-doctors had vanished. For a moment the thought that they were in a trap flitted through his mind; then voices at his feet drew his attention to the opening of a tunnel on a level with the floor. After a short discussion, they decided to follow.

"Phew! Stinks like a polecat!" muttered Stratton disgustedly, after crawling cautiously in utter darkness in the wake of the witch-doctor.

"Listen," exclaimed Bob, "you can feel the throb of drums again. We must be going toward them."

At last, at what seemed a great distance, they saw a pallor of light silhouetting the forms ahead of them which unexpectedly turned into legs. They, in turn, stood up. Above them, at some distance, was a milky ribbon of moonlight.

"Now where the devil are we going?" demanded Bob.

"Dunno," responded Stratton. "I began to think that they had the goddess or some fetish or other in a subterranean grotto but now we seem to be making for the open again."

The passage, which was evidently a rift between strata formed by volcanic action, was scarcely wide enough to accommodate Bob's broad shoulders. For what seemed an interminable time they wound and squeezed and stumbled in the darkness, sometimes bumping heavily against projections of rocks and at times having to wriggle through the walls at points where they narrowed in.

"I wonder," remarked Stratton suddenly, "if Wilkinson trod this road?"

"Why not?" demanded Bob. "And probably trod it back."

They stumbled along in silence for a few minutes. Then Stratton again meditatively—

"You know, I don't believe these people really want to kill us."

"If they had wanted to, nothing could have been easier in this hole."

"Oh, no, that doesn't follow. It's quite feasible that they might be keeping us for a more amusing party, don't you know. No, my point is that if the legend is true, as it seems to be— Oh —! I nearly broke my elbow—these people, ordinarily quite kindly, are compelled to—er—sacrifice us at the bidding of a supposititious god or goddess—simply have to although it hurts them to the quick and all that sort of thing, what? That's on general human principles, you know, just as the dear old inquisition fried one for the benefit of one's soul."

"If they intend to fry us," retorted Bob, "they'll do it for the benefit of their own soul, you bet!"

"Yes, yes, that's quite true. What the deuce did I bring this confounded helmet for? Quite true, but that's always the basic motive of all actions—the ego. Hello!"

As suddenly as the raising of a curtain

they stepped from the narrow cañon into the open, and the throb of the drums leaped as if someone had plucked the mute from a violin.

XII

THEY stood between two precipitous mountain slopes, one side in dense shadow and the other blue in the moonlight. Below was a strip of forest like a great black tongue projecting into the vast gully, the top of which narrowed like a funnel.

Up and down the natural bed of the ravine were small points of steam swaying like dancing ghosts. All these points seemed hastening to a point just beneath the white men, the basin of a crater on the lip of which were squatted, like mad fishermen around a pool, some two hundred men whose ivory bangles betokened their nobility. Each and every head was turned in the direction of the fissure in the mountainside from which the white men had issued.

The moon was almost overhead so that their shadows were not more than two feet long as they advanced in silence over the lava floor. No limb moved in the whole assembly, nor did the rhythm of the drums change a fraction. As they approached a hiatus in the line of watchers, they were aware of a faint hissing sound like that of a vast being breathing softly.

"Hot sulfur springs and the voice of God talking in the wilderness," murmured Stratton. "Now for the goddess!"

On the brink of the crater the three witch-doctors stopped abruptly and in unison began to scream some question. From the circle of chiefs came the bass response—

"Ough! Ough!"

Again and again shrieked the three and, as before, came the responses like some wild liturgy. The white men took three steps forward in line with the wizards.

The side of the crater ran gently down for about twenty-five feet. The floor was about fifty yards in diameter. Scattered about were numerous protuberances which were slowly distinguished as animals: buck, mountain leopard, many elephants, each of which was in perfect

preservation and looked as if carved in snow. Among them were dotted other bodies, green and dark-blue in the light of the moon. One, close at hand, they made out to be the form of a native lying as if frozen in sleep.

"Extraordinary!" murmured Stratton. "It's been a hot sulfur spring and these bodies are preserved by the calcareous deposit—crystalline salt, you know."

"But how on earth did they come here?"

"Don't know—animals I mean. Look! Those green bodies must be of recent date. Probably this valley is a pass into another valley. Coming through, they've been trapped in the sulfur fumes or drowned and boiled to death, although they don't look like that. Possibly it's carbonic gas. We must look out. This explains the goddess, although I don't see——"

"Look!" exclaimed Bob pointing to a spot where, between the white carcass of an elephant and the green body of a native, lay another body as white as snow, the figure of a European lying with his head resting on his arm, as a man asleep. "Wilkinson!"

"Good — you're right! It must be! But how came he to——"

Suddenly, much as a band stops in a circus at the moment the trapeze artist does a dangerous stunt, the drums ceased, and one witch-doctor, uttering an appalling shriek, danced down the incline. Upon the floor he began to caper toward the middle in silence, save for the hissing and grumbling of the earth god. Every now and again he leaped high in the air like a whale spouting, continued to gyrate slowly and leap again. Across the arena he went until he came to a white object which, in the distance, looked like an altar.

Climbing up, the witch-doctor raised his arms above his head as he uttered a long, quavering wail which was answered as before by the grunting chorus of the watchers around the rim. In the same leisurely manner, but leaping every few yards, the man danced back to the spot where the white men stood.

"Evidently this is the ordeal," remarked Stratton. "Now what the devil's the trick?"

"Seems all right," commented Bob, "otherwise this fellow would have gone under in spite of any magic he may believe he has. Let me go first."

"No, certainly not. I will."

"Well, we'll go together."

As they were disputing, the three witch-doctors approached and, pointing, informed them that they must go to salute the goddess yonder upon the rock.

"That's the goddess over there, he says!" exclaimed Bob excitedly. "They say that I must go first and then you," he added mendaciously and, turning to the witch-doctor, told him that, as their medicine was weak from their long journey, they wished to be permitted to go singly. The savage comprehended and consented.

"Shut up, old man, we've got to do as we're told," said he to Stratton's further objections. "If there's anything wrong there's no sense in both going out together. And another thing: Give me your helmet. I've told them that that's our magic charm and that will be useful afterward. Come on! Anyway, you can cover me if they try any foul play. Get me?"

Stratton at length reluctantly consented and handed over the magic hat.

"Look out for gas!" he shouted as Bob, rifle in hand, boldly walked down the incline.

"Phew!" he called out at the bottom, "—— of a stink!"

"Sulfurated hydrogen!" shouted Stratton. "That's all right!"

SWIFTLY, with his eyes set upon the distant rock to which the witch-doctor had gone, Bob strode across the arena. Spitting and puffing with disgust, he reached the white altar, which proved to be a large piece of lava which had apparently rolled down into the crater. Beside it reclined the body of a nude young woman. Upon the rounded limbs were bangles wrought in gold, and upon her breasts were small golden plates; her mouth was small and the Semitic features were framed in hair that was straight and cut like an Egyptian block. Whatever had been her natural color, it had been turned by the preserving salts to a fleshy whiteness, a statue in alabaster

staring eternally with perfect eyes across the basin of the crater.

As Bob bent his long body slightly to view her he was conscious of a choking sensation. He coughed violently and stood up.

"Better not monkey about," he thought. "Perhaps there's a gas outlet or some trick here."

He climbed on top of the rock and throwing up his arms, yelled—

"All right!"

He saw the circle of chiefs' heads gravely watching him. In their midst, upon the far side, the three witch-doctors squatted beside Stratton who, at the signal that all was well, began to walk down the slope into the arena. Bob leaped off the rock, still coughing slightly and conscious of a violent irritation of the lungs.

He turned for another look at the goddess. Again, as he bent, something appeared to clutch him by the throat. He choked, swore, straightened up and started across the arena. Stratton had vanished.

For a moment Bob thought that he had missed him and searched among the figures around the witch-doctors sitting in full moonlight. He was sure that he had seen the little Englishman starting to meet him; he remembered he had sworn because Stratton had forgot to play up to the game of the magic hat.

Bob hastened his steps. Vainly he

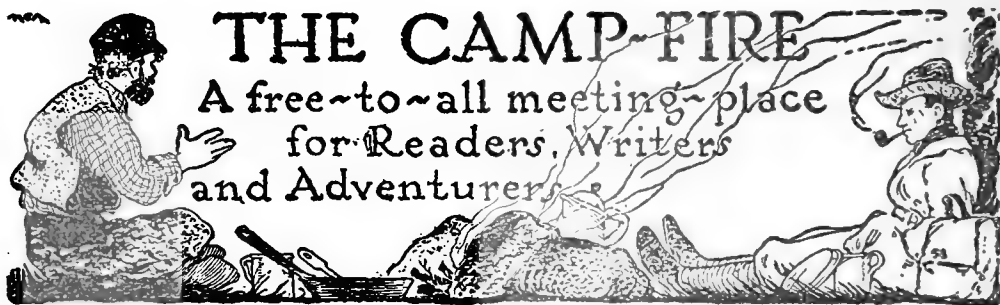
searched among the figures lining the crater, hoping that if anything were wrong he would be able to read it in their actions. But they were natives. He began to run and fell over the tusk of an elephant. He rose, conscious of a dizziness and had a violent fit of coughing. Ten feet farther along he saw Stratton half-kneeling, half-lying, making convulsive motions with both hands at his throat.

The effect of the fall and his little partner's actions flashed the truth into his mind. The basin was a vast pond of carbonic gas to the depth of about four or five feet, through which his height had enabled him to wade as through water. He recollected that the witch-doctor's leaps resembled a swimmer coming up for air.

Without an instant's hesitation he took a deep breath, dived and clutched Stratton by the waist. The hasty effort, combined with the tax already made upon his lungs, caused him to gasp, expelling air and inhaling a full breath of the poisonous gas. He contrived to heave the inert body to his shoulder. Gasping painfully, he saw the grim circle of immobile watchers, staggered a few feet, sobbing and dizzy. Stratton's body slipped. Bob reeled, clutched blindly, came to his knees and rolled over sideways.

There they lay, with an arm about each other, like two sleeping children.





THE CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting-place
for Readers, Writers
and Adventurers

IN this issue we have our first "Off the Trail" story, as marked by an * and explained in the note on the second contents page. Of course you can't judge the general idea from any one story, but keep your eye on them as they happen to appear and reserve your final opinion until you've seen quite a little bunch of them. There probably won't be more than one every other issue, probably fewer.

And remember that these stories aren't marked to indicate that they're either better or worse than the other stories in the same issues—merely in some way different.

ONE of our identification-tags saved this man's life and he writes to thank us. And it was not his card at that. I'm sorry that he did not give us the number of the tag or even a civilian mail address so that we could have the name of the tag's original owner. I've written Mr. London in care of the British War Office. Anyhow, we're glad one of our cards was of service to him. I think the Yank medico would have cared for him just the same, but if said medico was a member of our Camp-Fire—and heaven knows there are a lot of doctors among our number—the tag may well have got Corporal London some extra care and attention even beyond what any ordinary American would have received.

New York.

Waking up from a sorely needed sleep, I perceived lying on the floor a bright object that I later found out to be an identification-tag issued by *Adventure*.

TEN days later I led a patrol over the top to find information regarding a drive the Germans were going to start for the Channel ports. As the dawn was rising, we had to work mighty quick, my men having lost much time looking for enemy outposts.

At last we succeeded in coaxing a few of the boche to accompany us back, with the aid of our bayonets. Through some carelessness or other I strayed from my men, eventually losing myself in the barren wastes of "No Man's Land," constantly stumbling over the bodies of friends and foes who had "gone West" the evening before.

Presently I sighted a shell-hole and made for it, finding the body of a dead German. I changed clothes with him, mine being muddy and wet and continually adding to my discomfort. As morning appeared I started to crawl for our lines, reaching within a hundred yards of them, when an enemy sniper winged me in the shoulder. After crawling some time I became unconscious.

THE following morning the Yanks broke the Hindenburg Line and one of their medical corps picked me up and, believing me dead, dropped me, but some inner sense told him to examine me more closely. Tearing open my coat, he saw tied around my neck the tag and, taking me for an American, had me taken to the rear, possibly saving my life as the wound was serious.

Later returning to Canada, I was discharged and came to New York, hoping to make it my future home.

I feel it my duty to write you this little story as a token of appreciation for the services rendered by the little tag issued by this magazine, which without the slightest doubt saved my life.—JACK LONDON, Corporal Seaforth Highlanders, 42nd Scottish.

STRONG response to the suggestion of establishing Camp-Fire "stations" keeps coming in. So far as I can, in getting the plan into practical shape, I am guided by the opinions and suggestions that come in from you. I'd like to bring up each point to be voted on democratically by all of you, but if this were done we'd be a year or two in even getting started on our stations.

For example, one of you writes a letter like the following, raising a point that ought to be passed on by all of us, not just by us here in the office. It takes several days to reach me. Suppose I'm

able to put aside all other work, read it and get it ready for the printer at once. Then it may have to wait a week or ten days before the printer's schedule brings him to it. To cut matters short, it will reach your eyes in from two to three months. Then you can write in your opinions if you wish, which you may do at once or a week or two after that issue has gone on the stands. It takes anywhere from a few hours to a few days (or even weeks) for the letter to reach me. Again a question of when the printer and I can get to it. Then another two or three months before your argument, which may possibly raise new points in connection with the first, can get before all of you. It's taken somewhere around half a year to get this far along. If further discussion results, add two or three months or more before it can come up again.

THE result is that it would take forever to get anywhere on even one out of many points. The only way to get things moving is for me to act as clearing-house, soak up the various opinions as they come in, follow majority opinion where it shows definitely, use my own judgment where it doesn't, assemble all the points into a whole as best I can and just say to you, in effect: "Here it is, fixed up as well as I can to meet your general opinions. Let's go ahead and try it as it stands. As it goes along we can change it if changes are desired or prove necessary."

I hope you'll bear all this in mind, not only in connection with our stations, but in the case of anything else that comes up in the future or has come up in the past. I have no desire to do the czar stunt, but we're too scattered and it involves too much delay for really democratic methods to be followed. As clearing-house I'm just doing the best I can to make things the way the majority wants them and yet get them into actual operation.

ON the point raised in the following letter I can't quite make up my mind, though I believe the writer's view is the right one. No one else has expressed himself on this point. (If I don't vote on it at all, then there is a "unanimous"

vote in its favor.) Suppose we make it a general rule, to be changed later if you wish, that there shall be only one station in towns of thirty thousand or less.

Tucson, Arizona.

I'm strong for your idea of establishing Camp-Fire stations throughout the world wherever convenient. If you had started it up ten or twelve months ago, I could have helped start one at Panama City, but now I'm on the move again and have no idea of where I'll be a month from now. My P. O. Box is about the only thing that won't change.

I would suggest, though, that in a town of ordinary size, like Tucson, with something like twenty-five thousand to thirty-five thousand people, or less, there be only one station. There would be no real need for more than one, and the fact that there were two or more might easily lead to a sort of snobbery, if one happened to have a more expensive place than the other. I don't believe our Camp-Firers would be much inclined to that sort of thing, though, so perhaps two or more would be O.K. But in case there were two or more asking to start a Camp-Fire station in the same town or locality, why not ask them to get together and decide on one place, instead of stringing it out over two or three? This of course applies only to medium or small-sized places, or the same locality in a large city. I'd like to see as many stations come into being as there are permanently located Camp-Fire members. If I get a permanent place to hang my hat, you can count me in on it, too.—

ROBERT S. GORDON.

ANOTHER of you has suggested that no one be entitled to use a station unless he has either one of our identification-cards or a Camp-Fire button. This is a point I will not decide until there's been time to get opinions from the rest of you. It might seem to some only a scheme for forcing people into getting cards or buttons from this magazine—a "foxy advertising stunt" and all that kind of thing. A button or metal card costs you twenty-five cents; most of you know there is no profit in them for us and I can prove it to any doubters. Cardboard cards are given out free, unless you count the two-cent stamp for return postage. Just the same, I'm not going to decide this point till I hear from the rest of you.

For that matter, the whole station scheme can be considered "a foxy advertising stunt." So can the whole "Camp-Fire" scheme, the whole "Ask Adventure" stunt, our identification-cards, buttons, mail-service and "Lost

Trails." Anything whatever that a magazine does is an advertising stunt if it attracts people's interest and attention. Just the same, no one of you is asked to have anything to do with any of them unless he figures out for himself that he can get more out of it for himself than he puts into it.

No, no one has been riding me on this subject. I haven't any grievance—just steering clear of that card or button requirement idea so no one will try to hang something on me.

BUT here's the general idea for stations, subject, always, to changes if desired.

A station may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a station shall display the regular station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and provide and preserve a sufficiently substantial register book. When there are enough stations to warrant even a small wholesale order this office will furnish the books and signs. (I think I'll be ordering them soon.) No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause or complaint from members, a station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A STATION bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to condition of trails, etc.; resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above station privileges. (Question of requiring identification-card or Camp-Fire button to be decided later.) Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

A station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members is excellent.

THE following comrades have already come forward with offers of stations even before the plan has been definitely shaped as to details. Camp-Fire owes them its thanks. Until the magazine supplies them with registers and signs they are under no obligation to furnish these, but will doubtless manage temporary substitutes.

Arthur R. Lloyd, 16 Cross Street, Malden, Mass.
 Harry J. Lang, 137 South Arlington Street, East Akron, Ohio.
 R. L. Hastings, Granville, Vt.
 G. L. A. Bleemers (Capt.), United States Reserve Army, Tucson, Ariz.
 A. M. Barlow, 70 Jones & Pierce, 609 11th Street, Wichita Falls, Texas.
 John Bradford Main, The Junior Yanks, 144 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Ill.
 A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall, Ione, Wash.
 Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monsen, Gen. Pet. No. 2, Lost Hills, Calif.
 Wm. H. Fagan, 1404 New York Avenue, N. W., Washington, D. C.
 Paul A. Buerger, 216 11th Street, Milwaukee, Wis.
 G. DeH. Lyon, 91 North Pine Avenue, Albany, N. Y.
 Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 South 9th Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Add your name to the list so that it can be printed for the benefit of Camp-Fire members as soon as possible.

SEVERAL Camp-Fires ago Señorita Trujillo came to us with a frank complaint over the American habit—particularly in magazine stories—of applying the word "greaser" to all Mexicans. The following from E. E. Harriman is perhaps a just analysis of the case:

Los Angeles.

Señorita Aurelia Trujillo, may I have your attention for one moment? As one of the writers who have used the offensive word, allow me to offer an explanation. I would do so respectfully, politely.

I HAVE lived in Los Angeles County, California, almost thirty-four years. I have known many people of Spanish blood in that time, many from Mexico. I know many of whom I never think as "greasers," others to whom no other name seems to apply. Thomas Nelson Page does not feel aggrieved when one alludes to "Gawgie crackahs!" They are not in his class and he is untouched by the allusion.

No Englishman of letters feels hurt when one speaks of "cockneys." Dumas, Balzac, Hugo, would have been unscarified by any

allusion to the "Apaches of Paris." The decent element in Mexico is never "greaser" to one who knows. It is the immoral, unregenerate, thievish class that gets the slang name. As one Mexican-born man of Spanish blood called them here, when speaking to me, "the — Apache element in Mexico."

I SPEAK now of the element all too common among the peon class, with vocabularies principally made up of words and phrases you never heard. The class that packs a knife, even when reduced to shirt, overalls and *sombrero de palmo*. The class that steals as naturally as a snake bites. The class that herds like cattle, with as little regard for the decencies of life, verminous, drunken, diseased and vicious.

I do not refer to the scores and hundreds of Mexican-born and Mexican-bred citizens who are honored for their integrity in this city. I turn from thoroughbred to scrub in humanity as I do in a stock show.

Señorita Trujillo, there are MEXICANS and Mexicans, just as there are AMERICANS and Americans.

SO, Señorita Trujillo, when you read the word "greaser" in the pages of *Adventure*, consider that it is used as we apply the word "hoodlum" in our cities, to the disreputable, not to a people at large.

I might be induced to call a cattle-thief, horse-thief or ladrón of any sort a choice collection of names, if I could not talk to him with a Winchester. That would not hit my next neighbor of the same nationality. I was born in Ohio. That is no reason why I should defend Cassie Chadwick. I lived twenty-two years in Minnesota. That does not bind me to defend Doc Ames of Minneapolis.

I think you will find, if you run through the back numbers, that in almost every case where the word is used, it is applied to the lowest class, the criminal element. In that case the shot passes far below you, too far below to hear it strike. Does the bird in the tree give thought to the troubles of the toad? *Es lo mismo* in this case, *señorita*.

Keep your chin up and your eyes away over yonder. Consider that the writer is hitting at a class far below your range. Never flutter a feather, for the shot is not fired at you or yours or at any decent *paisano*. And so *despedida á Dios*, Señorita Trujillo.—E. E. HARRIMAN.

ANOTHER letter about the Old West and its famous characters:

Deming, New Mexico.

During the last year or so I have met several of the genuine "Old-Timer" herd and have made several good friends.

I read the argument in "Camp-Fire" about "Wild Bill." Now, here in Deming lives a person who is going on ninety years of age, by the name of W. F. Gordon, "Navajo Bill," we call him. He knew Kit Carson personally,

and I asked him about "Wild Bill." He says, he (W. B.) was the *real stuff*. Gordon says he has seen Wild Bill stand between two telegraph-poles and hit them both at once with his six-shooters. He also said that Hickock and Cody were the two best plainsmen of their day.

I also know Gus Gildea quite well. Perhaps some of the old fellows will recall these names.—E. F. KIERNAN.

A SECOND case of a man who has really been through the San Blas country—the only case, as this comrade claims. Does any one know of still others who really know the interior of this bit of territory so close to the Panama Canal and yet so unknown to white men, so carefully and fiercely guarded from all "foreigners"?

The comrade who sends in the second name was one of the most active men in the United States in building up the first American Legion, 1914-16, the original Legion started by our Camp-Fire for Preparedness and numbering 24,000 to 25,000 men. It is fitting that he should now be on Major-General Wood's staff, for General Wood was one of the Legion's chief sponsors. Unofficially, of course, but in those days before the United States was drawn into the war, it wasn't healthy for an Army officer to advocate Preparedness even unofficially.

THE Administration, though now we hear a great deal about its wonderful preparations for war (said preparations all having suffered from unreadiness and many of them not materializing until the war was over), was in those days very much opposed to any preparations whatsoever, preferring to take the risk of being caught unprepared and paying the bill in delay and needless expense in money and American lives. General Wood was not only clear-sighted but patriotic enough to risk his whole future by doing his utmost to rouse the country to its danger and the need of Preparedness. Despite the Wilson Administration, he did more than any other one man except Roosevelt to awaken Americans to the coming peril. And he had to pay the costs. The logical commander of the A.E.F., he was carefully side-tracked by the Wilson Administration and suffered the humiliation of being denied any kind

of command at the front. His only resort was to serve his country to the last ounce of his ability in the subordinate task assigned him at home.

When you write down the heroes of the war write General Wood's name close to the top. He met the hardest test of the soldier and of the citizen and he came clean.

The other day one of you wrote me that he was going to become a Canadian because he had served this country in war and she hadn't treated him right. As a citizen of the United States or of any other country, he, and all similar kickers, would do well to take a lesson from General Leonard Wood in citizenship. We Americans need the lesson that citizenship in a democracy is not merely a matter of "What can I get out of it?" but a matter of obligation, responsibility, duty and unwavering service.

MAJOR JNO. S. BONNER, who sends us the following letter, is a member of the Chicago chapter of the Adventurers' Club, of which Theodore Roosevelt was an honorary member. Several other members or ex-members of General Wood's staff, and General Wood himself, are members of the New York chapter, as are various other Army and Navy officers.

Chicago.

It is a long time since I last had this pleasure, and some interesting events have intervened. It is of no particular importance; but this may serve to advise yourself and the Camp-Fire that I am still casting a shadow and am now serving on Major General Leonard Wood's staff in the Central Department.

Recalling the old days of the American Legion, I am doubtless one among many highly pleased to note your attitude toward the new American Legion, of whom I am which. The new Legion is destined to a great future and will deserve the support which it will receive.

BUT what I really wished to bring to your attention, and the apology for this screed, is a matter which may be of interest to the Camp-Fire. In your last number we were advised that "Cabron" Brown is the one man who successfully toured the San Blas country and emerged all in one piece. The purpose of this letter is to introduce to whomsoever may be interested Captain G. L. Fitz-William, V.C., D.S.O., M.C., late B.R.E., and present sub-chief of the San Blas tribe.

Captain Fitz-William is an American of

Texan nativity, though his service in the late unpleasantness was in the British Army, and so far as I can learn he is the one white man who has established friendly relations with the San Blas tribe and is free to come and go and trade among them as he desires. And not only that, but he is a duly and truly prepared and designated sub-chief of the tribe and as such is authorized to sport the carved cane which is emblematic of supreme authority. His record and experience with this little known and hitherto impenetrable tribe dates from 1912.

If the members of the Camp-Fire would be interested in details, including photos, I can readily supply them, as I am now in close touch with Captain Williams and contemplating a visit to that primitive region under his chaperonage.

With sincere personal regards to yourself and all the members of our Camp-Fire.—
JNO. S. BONNER, Major U. S. A.

SOME queries and some interesting bits about the Old West. I'm sure any sheriffs and deputies among us will hold their fire as requested. And if they do, I hope we'll hear more from this old-timer.

Arlington, Texas.

After two years of lurking in the shadows, listening to the bunch at the Camp-Fire pow-wow, and now sure "thar ain't no sher-ruffs" at the blaze, I'm going to step into the clearing with a flag of truce waving and ask all deputies to hold their fire while I make an inquiry.

HOW many of the "old buckeroos" remember the following: "Kid Barnet of Mineral Wells"; Tex George Barnes, a "bad" man with the emphasis on the word "bad," mostly of anywhere; "Young Wild" West, last heard of on the Whyle ranch, Tex. (the name sounds like six-cent fiction, but it is his name and he looked the part); Bill Posey, cattle-thief, who was killed at Wichita Falls (killed or captured); Joe Collins of Sam Bass's gang. If any of you do, please speak up and let us know more of them. I know almost all of their history and knew most of them.

Can any of the Camp-Fire supply the remaining verses? I have forgotten them;

SAM BASS

Sam Bass was born in Indiana,
That was his native home,
And at the age of seventeen
Young Sam began to roam.

He first came out to Texas,
A cowboy for to be,
A kinder-hearted fellow
You hardly ever see.

Sam used to deal in race-stock,
One called her "Denton Mare,"
He matched her in scrub races
And raced her at the fair.

Sam used to coin the money,
He spent it mighty free.
He always drunk red "likker"
Wherever he might be.

Sam had four bold companions,
Four bold and daring lads,
Their names were Richinson, Jackson,
Joe Collins and "Old Dad."

Four bolder, braver cowboys
The Texans never knew;
They whipped the Texas Rangers
And ran the boys in blue.

That is as far as my memory allows me to go with it. It was composed by a "longhorn," many years ago, as "the boys in blue" prove, for they wore the blue then, not khaki.

JUST a few miles from where I am at present located, Sam made one of his daring train hold-ups at Grand Prairie. To stop the train (a Texas and Pacific) they piled cord-wood across the track. The engineer thought he would keep going and knock his way through. They are still picking up parts of his engine.

Sam was full of optimism. The day he was surrounded by a posse of a hundred and fifty strong—he was amid a lot of rocks, fighting them off, when the day became so hot he could hardly stand it.

"Is hell hotter'n this?" he yelled at the posse. "You'll find out pretty soon," some one answered.

"That's right." Then silence.

"I done sent some of yuh down to welcome me, haven't I?"

No answer.

During the day, the posse claim, he stood

erect, looked around and walked over to where a sage-bush afforded a little shade, and there, over a rock, he fought them off until night.

The next morning Sam was gone. Well, I guess I will back out into the shadows again. Good-night.—CHAS. B. McCAFFERTY.

OUR old friend M. Logie, after going through the great war on the Salonika and Western fronts with the British and our own Army, was keen to get back to "God's country." He liked it but, even shortly after his return, when I saw him for an interesting half-hour or so, he was beginning to fret under the inaction and was busily looking for more excitement. Early in November I had a letter from him, written in Paris. From the following extract you will judge that by the time you read this he will be where things are happening.

Paris.

Have been trying to connect up with one of the new Republics; so far have not been successful, but "never say die." Have met several Americans—old-timers—who are serving with the Lithuanian forces. They have organized a regiment of infantry, composed of all the races and nationalities there are, quite a large percentage being Yanks. Will be a great mix-up when the American Poles and the Lithuanian bunch are opposing one another.

Hope to inform you of success shortly. A great gamble all the same.—MARC LOGIE.



LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

IN our last Looking Ahead we were discussing the fact, recently brought to light, that there are college presidents who are paid less than the average street-car motorman. We think, most of us, that this is wrong. It might be well to consider why we think so.

Why should the college professor be paid more than the street-car conductor? Why

should the high-school teacher receive a salary higher than that of the man who sweeps out the building? In the case of brain-work *vs.* hand-labor, which is entitled to the greater compensation?

By any common-sense reasoning, brain-work deserves more. First, because efficiency in brain-work necessitates a bigger investment of

time and money than does efficiency in hand-work. Second, because there are fewer who can qualify for the work. Third, because if it were not for brain-work we would still be monkeys in the jungle; the whole development of civilization has been merely a development in using brain-work *instead of* hand-work, in inventing machinery and tools—all the way from the boat-paddle, the knife, the wagon-wheel, to the electric motor—whereby brain-work produces a *substitute* for hand-work, makes the brain do the work instead of the hand.

For any people to pay hand-work more than brain-work is to offer a premium to every one who will work backward toward savagery and away from civilization. It is giving a people the strongest possible impulse to turn backward in its development and revert to the jungle conditions.

Yet that is what we are doing now.

WE Americans are so busy, each of us and each class of us, trying to see how much selfish profit we can make out of things for ourselves that we have got to the stage where each of us—and each class of us—is unconsciously doing all he can to injure his own selfish interests. We are working so selfishly that we are injuring the whole of which we are the parts. To advance the interests of any part of the people over the interests of the people as a whole inevitably in the long run hurts the interests of that part itself. Capital has proved it and is beginning to reap the bitter fruits. Labor is now proving it and surely will reap the bitter fruits in its turn. The rest of us have been proving it right along in our neglect of public affairs for the sake of our private affairs, and are beginning to realize that we are paying the bitter price.

There is no road to selfish gain except through unselfish gain. No class or individual can find permanent prosperity until a sufficient number of Americans have begun working, not for themselves, but for others, until they realize that civilization is not an inexhaustible grab-bag but a carefully built and delicate organism to which they must give constantly in order to take constantly.

We have become so forgetful of our common interests and destiny that, by leaving only the meager scraps to our brain-workers, we are heading ourselves back toward the jungle.

WE are the people of the United States.

Our government and civilization will be always good or bad according as we are good or bad. We are becoming pretty well awake to the fact that they—well, need a lot of improvement. Therefore it must be that we ourselves, the citizens, need a lot of improvement. To be perfectly plain, we are bad citizens. We've had the idea that if we obeyed the laws, voted regularly and honestly and served the country in war-time, we were doing all that was necessary to make us good citizens. We see now that this was not enough.

Why didn't we know sooner that it was not

enough? *Because we had never been taught what good citizenship really is.* We had schools to teach and train our brains and hands, churches to look after our morals, gymnasiums and athletics to make our bodies good. But we had nothing whatsoever to teach us what good citizenship is, to tell us how to be really good citizens.

We had parents and institutions to teach us individual morality. But we had nothing in the world to teach us civic morality.

WE had the simple idea that, merely because we were Americans, we would just naturally soak up democracy from the air without any effort or thinking on our part, so we never even thought of providing something to teach us what democracy is. Now, having been forced to do some thinking, we find that democracy has somehow slipped away from us. We differ among ourselves as to how much of it is still left in this country. We differ on this because we no longer know clearly just what democracy is.

Ask a hundred ordinary men or women to define democracy and I'll venture that most of your answers will be mere empty platitudes and general statements like "government by, of and for the people" and that not ten of the hundred can give you a *working* definition or tell you off-hand to what extent our present government conforms to that kind of democracy. Some of the hundred probably can't give you any definition at all, not half of them will have ever given the matter real thought and not fifteen of them will have thought enough to have anything to say that is worth listening to. A fine lot to *be* a democracy:

By the way, what is *your* definition of democracy?

NO, we don't know what democracy and real citizenship are. And we don't know because we never were taught, never were systematically made to think about it.

Our schools don't teach them. They teach the pupil formal civics, history (generally distorted and lifeless), economics, sociology and all that, but they do not teach *him* to be a good citizen or even what a good citizen really is. What democracy, if any, is held up to him is a dry and distant abstraction with practically no personal connection with him himself—his own personal responsibility and obligation in the democracy of which he is to be a living and vital part. A dead silence.

If we do learn anything about real democracy and personal citizenship we learn it somewhere else than in school.

Yet, by some kind of idiot tradition, our schools are supposed to make good citizens.

If we are to retain what of good we have, if we are to go on being a democracy at all, if we are going to build at all solidly for the future, then real democracy and real citizenship must be taught in our schools. You can't, no matter what style of architecture you follow, build a sound house out of rotten bricks or a sound government out of rotten citizens.

I HAVE said these things many times before in these articles, but one point has never been touched—a vital point:

Who is going to do the teaching?

Taking the present teachers of the land as a whole, they are totally unfit to teach democracy and citizenship as those things should be taught. A great part of them are incapable of becoming fit.

No, it isn't their fault; it is *our* fault. I have great respect for the teachers. Considering the conditions we impose upon them, they are doing their work admirably. But the conditions we impose make it impossible for them to do what should be done. I have been a teacher myself, my sympathy with them is tremendous, and my indignation is white-hot over the chains we are stupid enough to hang upon them.

AS has already been pointed out, a college president gets eighteen cents an hour, a motorman sixty cents. Taking them all together, from college president down, the teachers of the great enlightened and self-admiring American people average a "salary" of—at a generous estimate—thirty-odd dollars a month! We have a habit—even, if I am not mistaken, in New York City, our boasted metropolis—of often paying the school janitor more than the school teacher.

We boast about "the Little Red School-house" that "has made us what we are today," swelling out our chests with pride (over ourselves) and blatting much sentimentality. And we pay to the little woman who alone gives the little red school-house any value and life, a salary of \$15 or \$30 a month, giving her employment for only some nine months of the year. (In an Ohio town of some 8,000 or 10,000 people I taught high school myself two years for the princely salary of \$8.67 a week, \$450 a year.)

WHAT kind of service do you expect for such wages as that? Is it any wonder that only the very exceptional teacher is really fit for the work, since only the exception sufficiently loves the work to make the tremendous financial and *life* sacrifices its pursuit entails? The others teach only till they get married or can manage an escape to some other work—or find they haven't the ability for other work. One of our American witticisms is that "if you can't do anything else you can sell insurance or teach school." The wit who invented that witticism was either a degenerate or a fool, and we who laugh at it are little better.

Even when a highly capable man or woman remains in the teaching profession the meager salary and the nerve-wrecking work compel, in most cases, a starvation and drying-up process that tends steadily toward less and less real efficiency and vitality.

And yet to these teachers of America, whom we ourselves doom to be incapable of the tremendous task imposed on them, we send our

own children to be shaped and trained and molded through the greater part of their working hours!

WE invest hundreds of millions in school property, spend hundreds of millions more in its upkeep, and then violate all business efficiency and common sense by making it impossible to get even half returns on the investment. For the whole investment can give no results whatever except in its effects upon the children who are sent to school; the effects upon the children are in direct proportion to the ability of the teachers; the ability of the teachers is inevitably dependent upon the wages paid them, and we pay them wages that are not sufficient to pay a man for sweeping out the rooms.

Doesn't it make you hang your American head in 'shame—in shame over your own individual stupidity in being a party to such stupidity, bad business and injustice and for subjecting your children to such a handicap?

The children of today will be America tomorrow. And to the people who mold these children, on whom the children are dependent for their education, we pay less than to the man who sweeps dust out of rooms. Doubtless that man deserves all he gets, but, if he does, how much higher should be the wages of those for whose work were made the rooms which the janitor merely keeps warm and clean?

I HAVE complained at times against the specialists in economics and sociology because they get their feet too far off the ground, losing their perspective through too intense specialization, giving too much time to abstract theories and too little time to common sense. We need the specialists. Their work is invaluable. But we need, also, to do some common-sense thinking of our own, so that we shall not permit in public affairs a business stupidity we would not tolerate an instant in our private affairs, or a robbery of our children that, in our own homes, would send us on the war-path.

This matter of teachers' salaries is as simple as A, B, C, and as important as the alphabet itself. We know the importance of education. If we want good education, we must pay the educators. A million-dollar school-house cared for by a hundred splendid janitors can not educate our children. It has no educative value whatever until the teachers are put to work in it; its value will be in direct proportion to their ability, and their ability will be in direct proportion to the salaries paid to teachers. We would not be such fools as to lose the value of every cent invested in the school-house and its janitors by putting no teachers at all in it. Yet we *are* fools enough to lose the value of half the cents invested in it by putting into it only half-way teachers at less than half-way salaries.

The teachers of a democracy should be among the highest paid workers in the entire fabric of its civilization.—A. S. H.



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Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you, *post-paid*, the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying*.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: Mar., Apr., May, 1912; May, 1913. All for \$1.00, postage prepaid.—Address R. G. Bock, 45 N. 6th St., Hamilton, Ohio.

WILL SELL: First Jan., 1918, to First Jan., 1919. Price \$5.60, postage prepaid.—Address LLOYD K. PORTER, Aromas, Calif.

WILL SELL: All back issues from 1912 to date.—Address W. E. COLE, 3945 27th St., San Francisco, Calif.

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 109 Mountfort St., Boston, Mass., can supply *Adventure* back through 1918, and occasional copies before that.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask *Adventure*" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be type-written double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied. Unclaimed mail which we have held for a long period is listed on the last page of this issue.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, postpaid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Order of the Redless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(See also under "Standing Information" in "*Ask Adventure*.")

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure Magazine* by Our Staff of Experts.



QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given. When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **DO NOT** send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.

1. ★ Islands and Coasts

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1

BERLACH BROWN, Seattle Press Club, 1309 Fifth Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2

CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1

RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2

HAPSBURG LIEBE, 6 W. Concord Ave., Orlando, Florida. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3

DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1

CAPT. ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. Especially early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2

JOHN B. THOMPSON, P. O. Box 1374, St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Sioux City, Iowa. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Western U. S. Part 1

E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1

J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas. Minerals, lumbering, agriculture, travel, customs; topography, climate, natives, hunting, history, industries.

11. Mexico Part 2 Southern

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougall Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering that part of Mexico lying south of a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. Mining, agriculture, topography, travel, hunting, lumbering, history, natives, commerce.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 1

R. S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Minnesota and Wisconsin. Hunting, fishing, trapping; canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

★ (Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)

Return postage not required from U. S. or Canadian soldiers, sailors or marines in service outside the U. S., its possessions, or Canada.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2

S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer. Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 3

HARRY M. MOORE, Deseronto, Ont., covering south-eastern Ontario and the lower Ottawa Valley. Fishing, tenting, canoeing, mining, lumbering, agriculture, topography, travel, camping.

15. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 4

GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering Southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

16. North American Snow Countries Part 5

ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district; to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

17. North American Snow Countries Part 6

THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipment, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

18. North American Snow Countries Part 8

JAS. F. B. BELFORD, Richmond, Quebec. Covering New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Southeastern Quebec. Hunting, fishing, lumbering, camping, trapping, auto and canoe trips, history, topography, farming, homesteading, mining, paper and wood-pulp industries, land grants, water-power.

19. North American Snow Countries Part 7

H. S. BELCHER, The Hudson's Bay Company, Ft. Alexander, Manitoba, Canada. Covering Manitoba, Saskatchewan, MacKenzie and Northern Keewatin. Homesteading, mining, hunting, trapping, lumbering and travel.

20. Hawaiian Islands and China

F. J. HALTON, 632 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

21. Central America

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougall Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

22. South America Part 1

EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure Magazine*, Spring and Macdougall Sts., New York, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. Geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

23. South America Part 2

P. H. GOLDSMITH, *Inter-American Magazine*, 407 West 117th St., New York, N. Y. Covering Venezuela, The Guianas, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentine Republic. Travel, history, customs, industries, topography, natives, languages, hunting and fishing.

24. Asia, Southern

GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

25. Philippine Islands

BUCK CONNOR, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Covering history, natives, topography, customs, travel, hunting, fishing, minerals, agriculture, exports and imports; manufacturing.

26. Japan

GRACE P. T. KNUDSON, Castine, Maine. Covering Japan: Commerce, politics, people, customs, history, geography, travel, agriculture, art, curios.

27. Russia and Eastern Siberia

MAJOR A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Austin, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalien; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

28. Africa Part 1

THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada Co., Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Piver Coasts

of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

29. Africa Part 2

GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

30. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa

R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

31. ★ Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N.W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo

CHARLES BEADLE, 7 Place de Tertre, Paris, XVIII, France. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

32. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa

TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

33. ★ Australia and Tasmania

ALBERT GOLDIE, Hotel Sydney, Sydney, Australia. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should not be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Shotguns (including foreign and American makes). J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Building, Chicago, Ill.

B.—All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers (including foreign and American makes). D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

FISHING IN NORTH AMERICA**• Salt and Fresh Water Fishing**

J. B. THOMPSON, 906 Pontiac Building, Chicago, Ill. Covering fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; live bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen. Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

FOR ARMY, NAVY OR MARINE CORPS

Accurate, free information. What the Government is doing for discharged soldiers and sailors. Facts, not opinions, given. No questions answered involving criticism or bestowing praise or blame. Enclose stamped addressed envelope. Address—SERVICE, THE HOME SECTOR, Spring and Macdougall Streets, New York City, New York.

★ (Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in stamps NOT attached)

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Major A. M. Lochwitzky.

The Reindeer Industry

THIS business of raising reindeer is about the biggest undeveloped industry one can imagine. In many ways it knocks the spots off cattle ranching, for the problem of food has been solved by nature and enough provided to winter billions.

It is even claimed that the answer to the high cost of meat lies in the promotion of this new project. Would you love a life on the open range in about the healthiest spot on earth, with your fortune increasing at the rate of 40 per cent. each year?

Question:—"A friend and I have become very interested in the possibilities offered by the interior of Alaska. We both have had considerable experience in outdoor work and therefore do not require a large personal outfit.

Can you give us some information about the character of Central Alaska, the grazing possibilities, climate, and the chances of raising reindeer profitably? We would of course expect to start by entering the employ of some one engaged in business, to learn the game. Then when we became sufficiently informed we would start for ourselves.

I shall be deeply grateful for any help and advice you may feel to give."—SHERMAN R. CLARK, U. S. Navy.—

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—I am very glad to answer your letter concerning the reindeer industry. I have been waiting for some wide-awake person to sit up and notice this coming industry, of which the world knows little as yet. I may premise by saying, however, that, due largely to the information gathered by such men as Steffanson, the Canadian Government is making investigations on the subject. It is well that they should, because they have a much wider territory to consider than Uncle Sam.

So far, only a few white men (other than some "Laps") are raising reindeer in Alaska. The Government fathers the import of Siberian reindeer as a measure of support for the Eskimo, etc., in northern Alaska, and the herds have multiplied to something like one or two hundred thousand deer from a very small beginning.

Throughout central and northern Alaska, and of course in the same zones in Canada, viz., from the Arctic Ocean to the extensively wooded areas in the regions to the south that are more adapted to woods animals—moose, deer and the various fur-bearers—there exists a kind of vegetation, called deer moss, which in fact is, botanically, of several kinds, which is the natural food (and virtually the only food) of the caribou (wild reindeer). There is an unlimited quantity of it, for it is one of the largest components of the all-covering sur-

face of the earth—the "tundra," in fine. The caribou paw the snow off it and feed on it in Winter as in Summer. While it doesn't grow (so far as known) in Winter, it is utterly unimpaired by the severest cold—just as hay would be.

Cultivating reindeer is, to put it briefly, simply to keep your deer from straying away out of your control. Otherwise you simply live along yourself, doing as you durn well please. I don't mean that extensive breeding would be without its cares and responsibilities, for you can see, of course, that where you have a lot of them you would have to have a pretty wide range for them, live a nomadic life, be able to move long distances with your outfit, and devise a system of herding that would answer your needs. But it looks to me like a very easy thing, even as compared with beef raising—ranching in the big Western sense, that is. Feed, which is the big problem of the stock-raiser, is, virtually, no problem at all to the reindeer man, as God has made the northern tundras far more prolific and dependable in this respect than he ever made even the old prairies which now have vanished as prairies.

As far as hardship is concerned, there is just one problem to be mastered, and that is moving about the northern wastes ignoring weather, though in very bad weather your herd will not move unless you have left it in poor feed. A man soon masters this craft, and it's about the healthiest and most invigorating thing in the world, that life up there. I am thoroughly familiar with it. I've had to subsist on deer moss myself at times—brief times, I'm widely happy to state.

Deer are worth the price of beef down here, and half that or less up there, and they multiply about forty per cent. a year net. That is, after allowing for males, losses, etc., you could figure on that increment of your herds. If some way could be found of domesticating, or controlling, the wild variety, the caribou, which exist on the northern part of this continent in millions, would be a fine start for some ingenious and enterprising persons. I was going to say billions, but I am too considerate of your feelings and my own humble reputation to risk the word, though probably it would be a more accurate word than millions.

There are few intelligent people engaged in the business. I only know of one. There are, of course, a number of others up there in northwestern Alaska, but they are not intelligent in the sense of educationally developed intelligence, and probably incapable of rising to a conception of the thing in a large way. Go at it—data first, of course, both Canadian and American, and then first-hand investigation by a prolonged sojourn in the North. And if you do go at it, let me know your steps and your progress.

Big Game in British Columbia

HUNTING that will satisfy a soldier returned from France ought to be of top-notch caliber. Ed. L. Carson tells

where such hunting is to be found and how to get there.

Question:—"Regarding British Columbia and the Peace River country. I wish information as follows:

I am sixty years old, weigh two hundred and fifteen pounds, pretty soft and rather short of wind, but well, hearty and feel young in spirit. I have promised my older son a trip up there this fall if he wishes it. He is now a captain "over there," and will be home in July. He is six ft. two weighs one hundred and eighty-five, strong and a fine shot and natural woodsman and hunter—very strong and active. He wants to try big game and thinks Peace River country the proper place to go but would want your advice as to the best place.

It would take us about four days to go from here to Edmonton. I can not remain away more than about a month.

I presume we would need a guide, of course, and I would like to know what is necessary on such a trip and what of such necessities we should take from home and what is best to procure out there. Also give me an idea of expense—such as guide fees and hunting-license. Are there different kinds of non-resident hunting-licenses? I do not know that I would want a big-game license for myself. Would we have tents there? Should our guide be engaged in advance to have arrangements made for us? How far from rail would we be obliged to travel, and by what means?

Personally I would not want to go up in the mountains, but would expect to make camp as near the hunting-grounds as I could, and keep a kind of headquarters for my son and the guide. We have all the necessary guns and fishing outfits.

How is the fishing? What are the kinds of game and fish most likely to be found? Although I have been through the mountains by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Vancouver several times, yet I am a tenderfoot, as is my son as far as mountain shooting is concerned.

What are we allowed to bring back to the States if we procure any game? We could start about the middle of September. Do you think that is a good time of year to go? Could go later but not earlier. Aside from railway fare to Edmonton what would be a fair estimate of the cost of such a trip, needing a guide and outfit about fifteen or twenty days? How about the weather up there at that time of year? What bedding necessary from here?

Of course we could take two trunks to starting-point. If you were to make such a trip and were in our condition, where would you go and what route would you take? I may be imposing on you, but thank you in advance for your advice. Would you go via Grand Trunk

or Canadian Pacific, and to what point? Where could I obtain maps and literature of that country?"—J. B. SIMPSON, Wisconsin.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—With the limited time at your disposal Peace River is your best bet, as it is the most easy of access and there is plenty of water transportation for the short-winded man who would rather ride than walk. It is really too bad that you could not have six weeks and make the Stikine country but—well—what's the use?

I am having a copy of the Game Laws sent you which will tell you everything as to license fees, trophies taken from province, and so forth. Non-resident licenses cost \$25.

Beyond heavy outing clothes I would suggest that you take nothing except about \$500. All else may be obtained right on the spot.

I am going to suggest the Netekewin River as a likely place, subject to the approval of the gentleman to whom I am enclosing you a letter of introduction. Mr. MacLeod is the Government Agent at Peace River, besides being a darn good scout of whom I have never asked more than a few thousand favors and I know he will be of great assistance to a stranger in the country.

From Edmonton (via C. P. R.), take the Edmonton, Dunvegan and B. C. Railway right to Peace River. From here it is all water transportation to the hunting-grounds I have suggested. You can make the mouth of the Netekewin by river steamer and the balance of the trip by canoe.

The middle of September is as good a time as any, since by then the flies have ceased to bother and the game is in prime condition. You will find the nights cool even to light frost but nothing unpleasant, while the days are a dream of delight.

The Department of Interior, Ottawa, Canada, will furnish you with a map and descriptive literature relating to the district. This is naturally more for the benefit of home-seekers but contains much general and interesting information.

As to the fishing, I am not going to praise it since I have seen much better in other places. It may be, however, that I am spoiled by the streams of the farther north, where one really does not have to "fish" in order to get a food supply. Take your tackle along just the same, for you will catch some, and it may be that you will wonder why I did not enthuse over it, for I have no idea what sort of fishing you are accustomed to. I had a friend out here from Michigan a couple of weeks ago who fished all day and caught about thirty of a size that looked to me like fair bait for real fish. I was disgusted and he was delighted. From this you may gather that it might just be such a thing that I am not a competent judge of fishing.



LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the *Montreal Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

DENNISTON, ARCHIBALD F. Please write to your wife.—Address **MRS. MYRTLE DENNISTON**, 105 South Hall St., Webb City, Mo.

BELCHER, RALPH. Missing since April 25, 1914. Please communicate with your mother.—Address **MRS. T. J. BELCHER**, Green River, Wyo. Box 82.

CONDE, JAMES BACHE. Late of Clifton Heights, North Seventh Street, Philadelphia, Pa. Kindly communicate with his niece.—Address, **MRS. FRANCES BARTHOLOMEW**, née Frances Conde, Mountain Home, Marysville, British Columbia, Canada.

CANSLER, CLYDE. Please let your mother and me know where you are. Write or come home at once.—Address **MRS. LILLIAN CANSLER**, 1111 McCulloh St., Baltimore, Md.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SCHAFHAUSEN, LEO J. Last heard from in Toledo, Ohio. Please communicate or come home as soon as possible, on account of illness of our mother.—Address **ALBERT SCHAFHAUSEN**, 491 Forest St., Columbus, Ohio.

SAXON, WALTER PERCY. Last seen April 26th in Los Angeles. I would like to hear from you, Walter, as I have lots to tell you. Am still traveling.—Address **HARRY SAXON**, care of *Adventure*.

BEAVERS, FRANK E. Last heard of in Chicago, 1914. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address **WM. B. BEAVERS**, 4148 West 22d St., Chicago, Ill.

HARKE, PICOK. Tramped with me from San Francisco to Mexico City and then on steamer *Eastern Star* to Rio. Write to your old pal.—Address **RALPH PIERSON**, Sigma Chi Fraternity House, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N. H.

McCRAW, WOODROW JACK, of Baltimore, Md. Last heard of at Presidio, San Francisco, Cal. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **B. S. JUSTICE**, Box 863, Birmingham, Ala.

CAMPBELL, JAMES W., of Rungie, Texas. Last heard of October, 1917, with Company 54, 14th Battalion, 165th Depot Brigade, Camp Travis, Texas. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **B. S. JUSTICE**, Box 863, Birmingham, Ala.

BROWN, R. H. Last heard from at Syracuse, N. Y., February 1, 1916. Forty-two years old; snake tattooed on each wrist and woman's head on chest; six feet tall; slim; brown hair; blue eyes; slightly bald. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated by his mother.—Address **MRS. A. M. TIMMONS**, 316 North Rose St., Kalamazoo, Mich.

WENDE, BERNHARDT NICE. Enlisted in Engineer Corps, U. S. Service (1917) in Washington. Placed in charge of engineer work at Camp Humphreys, Alexandria, Va., September 20, 1918. Discharged from the Service December 18, 1918. Last heard from when in Baltimore. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **ELLEN NICE**, Tonawanda, N. Y., care of General Delivery.

ORPHAN. Wishes to locate father and mother. Was born May 30, 1901, and when a few days old adopted from Bethany Hospital, Kansas City, Kans., by W. L. Brown and wife, of Neosho Falls, Kansas. W. L. Brown and wife are dead. Please send any information to W. R. BROWN, Neosho Falls, Kans.

SKENE, JAMES PERCY. Left home in West Terre Haute, Indiana, two years ago this September. His mother is grieving for him constantly. Any information as to his whereabouts will be appreciated.—Address **JAMES SKENE**, 104 S. Seventh St., West Terre Haute, Ind.

WHITTERS, JOSEPH H. Last seen in Dayton, Ohio, in July, 1917. Since then I heard he was in Detroit, Mich. He is a machinist and about twenty years of age. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **J. E. DUFFY**, B. M. S., Hot Springs, So. Dak.

WANGENSTEIN, FRED, JR. Was a Sergeant in Company K of the 19th Infantry, Regulars; was my bunkie in Galveston in 1917. Last heard of was living in New York. Any one knowing him tell him to write "Chink" in regards to going on an expedition to South Africa.—Address **CHINK**, care of *Adventure*.

ELLIOTT, RICHARD LILLICOE. Last heard of in Chicago. Formerly lived in San Antonio. Tell him British Empire still going strong. Any one knowing his whereabouts please communicate with his friend **B. D. WOON**, care of Mrs. Adelaide Woon, 43 Aldwych, London, W. C., England.

ATKINS, W. F. L. Left South Wales for Canada February 23, 1914. Reported to be a Sergeant in Canadian Artillery and seen in July on duty on Franco-Swiss border. Please communicate with your people at home or your cousin Will.—Address **W. T. WALTERS**, 9036 Cottage Grove Ave., Chicago, Ill.

CONNOR, MAGGIE. Relatives of. Would like to get in touch with my relatives. I was born in New York City, December 8, 1880 or 1882. When three weeks old my mother left me at the orphans' home at 175 East 68th St. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **R. E. B.**, care of *Adventure*.

KNOWLES, EDWARD. Father. My mother and father were married in 1900. Father left home before I was born, and mother died when I was four years old. Father last heard of in Detroit, Mich., where I believe his parents live. Any information would be appreciated.—Address **EDWARD KNOWLES**, 18 Reed Ave., Monessen, Pa.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all un-found names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

WILSON, WILLIAM H. C., relatives of. Born in Decatur, Ill., March 10, 1872, enlisted in U. S. Army, and was Corporal Company F, 23d Regiment, U. S. Infantry, at Dallas, Tex. Honorably discharged at Jolo, P. I., June 30, 1899. Died at San Lazaro Hospital, Manila, P. I., August 19, 1904. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **GREG. R. WILSON**, care of *Adventure*.

HOWE, ROGER WILLOUGHBY. Was student at Syracuse University School of Forestry. Last seen by us just previous to his taking the train for Syracuse after his Christmas vacation, January 4, 1917. Enlisted in the Welland Canal Force under name of Robert Willoughby Howe, Jan. 29, 1917. Reported missing from his post with full kit and rifle May 31, 1918. Age twenty-one. Any information will be appreciated.—Address **M. C. HOWE**, R. D. 15, Groton, Tompkins Co., N. Y.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First-December or Mid-December issues of *Adventure*. They can get the names of the inquirer from this magazine:

ATKINS, WALTER J.; Baughman, Guy; Beaubier, Jerry E.; Bunker, Earl R.; Burkett, Sgt.-Major; Clochesy, William; Collins, Michael James; Conkle, Clarence; Cuthbert, Clarence; Doyle; Driscoll, John Joseph; Drumm-Jones, Charles J.; Geho, Pvt. David W.; Hayes, Arthur Joseph; Holmes, Norman L.; Howard, R. L.; Marchmonte, Merle; McPadden, Paul; Meadows, Julian H.; Morningstar, Richard; Murphy, Floyd; O'Hara, Earl William; Pollock, Granville A.; Pratt, George B.; Reed, Elswine E. or Geo. C.; Rohrbeck, Frank W.; Rounsley, Charley D.; Rowe, Glen S.; Rubenstien, Harry; Russell, John L.; Santry, Denis; Seay, Philip; Sheldon, Willis D.; Thomas, John W.; Tyler, Mrs. Ward, and Arthur C.; Wilkins, Norman Glen; Williams, James; Woon, Basil D.; Wooten, George.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Giffillan; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; G. H. Bennett; Bryon Chrisholm; Wm. S. Hiles; A. B. Paradis; E. E. S. Atkins; G. E. Hungerford; J. P. Goggins; C. Murphy.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by *Adventure* for the following persons, who may obtain it by sending us present address and proof of identity.

ALLISON, CORP. JAMES T.; Babcock, Lucius A.; Beaton, G. M.; Benson, Edwin Worth; Bryson, Clarence F.; Mr. Brownell; Carpenter, Capt. Robert S.; Carr, Fred; Casey, H. B.; Coles, Bobby; Cook, William N.; Cosby, Arthur F.; Engleby, B.; Garson, Ed.; Hale, Robert E.; Harris, Walter J.; Hart, Jack; Hines, Joseph; Kelly, Charles Lester; Koltzau, John; Kuckaby, William Francis; Kuhn, Edward; Kutcher, Harry; Lafer, Mrs. Harry; Lancaster, C. E.; Larisey, Jack; Lee, Dr. C.; Lee, Capt. Harry; Lee, Dr. William R.; Leighton, Capt.; "Lonely Jock"; Lovett, Harold S.; McAdams, W. B.; MacDonald, Tony; MacNamee, Alva L.; Madsen, Sgt. E. E.; Nichols, Leon; Hunt; Daniel O'Connell; Parrott, D. C.; Reid, Raymond D.; Rich, Rob; Rodgers, Stewart; Rundle, Merrill G.; Scott, James F.; Shepard, H. O.; Swan, George F.; Taylor, Jim; Tripp, Edward; Van Tyler, Chester; Von Gelucke, Byron; Wetherell, Corp. D. E.; Williams, Raymond J.; Williams, W. P.; Woon, Basil D.; S. 177284; 439; L T. 348; J. C. H.; W. S.-X. V.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address E. F. BRACE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD MID-JANUARY ISSUE

Eleven stories, each of them pulsing with life and action, come to you with our next number. Here are a few words about them.



IN ALEPPO BAZAAR

Through the narrow, tortuous alleys of Aleppo Bazaar, a young Turkish girl leads *Monty* and his friends. To turn back means the horrors of a Turkish prison—to continue with the girl means they know not what. "In Aleppo Bazaar," a complete novel, by Talbot Mundy, appearing in the next issue—An Up-and-Down-the-Earth Tale.

By Talbot Mundy

MAN TO MAN Part III

When "Hell-Fire" Packard gives orders that his grandson is to be broken—driven from the country—those who know the old man realize that things are about to happen; they do, but not exactly according to schedule.

By Jackson Gregory

MCCARNIE'S SECOND BET

When this canny Scotchman finds he has been betting against a sure thing, he does not squeal or start a fight; but in the history of Terra del Fuego he finds material for a unique revenge.

By H. A. Lamb

ERASED

Von Phul dreams of one day being appointed viceroy of India, but he fails to take into consideration the secret, unofficial police of that mysterious country.

By S. B. H. Hurst

THE JABIRU

College professors are not usually noted for the ability to use their fists, yet at the headwaters of the Amazon one called the "Jabiru" inflicts terrible punishment with his.

By Arthur O. Friel

THE REDEMPTION OF BILL HOLLAND

With the horror of a railroad disaster stabbing his conscience, Bill Holland sinks to the depths, then tries to "come back." But he finds every hand against him. Still he has fight left in his character.

By G. A. Wells

THE WIZARDRY OF FEAR

Inside the remote Chinese village, whence no man has returned, Partridge and Hazard, two young Americans, discover a plot for world domination which involves a weapon heretofore unknown.

By Robert J. Pearsall

IKE HARPER'S HISTORICAL HOLIDAY

If you are in any doubt as to who or what was the reason for the Fourth of July being a holiday, this story will not settle your mind.

By W. C. Tuttle

A DEAD MAN'S TALE

Twenty years before, Dekker had brained the man with a war-club. But now for six months he has been receiving notes from the dead man in the queer scrawl that Dekker knows only too well.

By Gordon Young

THE SUPREME COURT GOES FISHIN'

This fishing trip forces a representative of the Supreme Court to resort to his law books and two quarts of whisky in order to keep out of jail.

By Stephen Chalmers

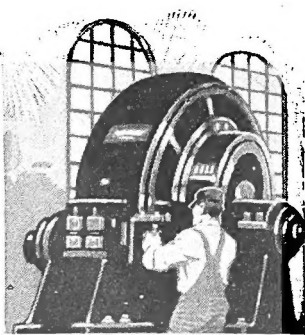
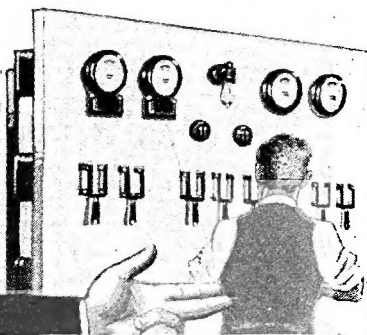
THE LAST JOKE OF JOKER JOE

This Tennessee mountaineer is very prone to practical joking, but there comes a day when he looks upon such diversion with horror.

By Hapsburg Liebe



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